



The cost of reported illegal animal abuse and neglect in Great Britain

This is the second report for the Animal Welfare Evidence Centre ('The Centre') and looks at the economic cost of illegal instances of animal abuse and neglect in Great Britain. It follows the first report, which outlines the scale of reported offences against animals.

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About the Animal Welfare Evidence Centre (The Centre)

The Animal Welfare Evidence Centre researches and shares evidence about why people harm animals, so we can prevent this harm. By understanding human attitudes and behaviour towards animals, we help the sector make informed, evidence-based decisions. We don't campaign. We produce robust, independent research, and share it openly to support lasting change.

About WPI Economics

We are an economics, data insights, policy and impact consultancy, but one that is a little different to many others. We draw on backgrounds in government and the private and charitable sectors to produce work designed to make a difference. We do not do research for research's sake. We are committed to ensuring that everything we do has an impact – which is part of the reason why we are a verified B Corporation.

Report authors:

Julia Wyjadlowska
Senior Consultant
WPI Economics

Tinuke Bamiro
Consultant
WPI Economics

Eoghan McCauley
Consultant
WPI Economics

Matt Beebee
Senior Consultant
WPI Economics

Rob Fontana-Reval
Chief Economist
WPI Economics

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1. Executive summary

This is the second of two reports examining illegal animal harm in Great Britain.¹ The first – *The scale of animal abuse and neglect in Great Britain* – established the scale of reported harm,² while this report assesses the economic cost of responding to, monitoring and enforcing reported offences of abuse and neglect against animals. For simplicity, unlawful acts of animal harm are referred to hereafter as ‘animal harm’, ‘animal abuse’ or ‘offences against animals’.

The findings are based on desk-based research, stakeholder engagement, and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests using the latest annual data available from a wide range of sources. Wherever possible, our estimates focus on the cost of illegal animal harm. However, as discussed in our first report, there are three important data limitations:

1. This report cannot cost illegal harms that are not identified, reported or recorded, and the first report showed that this ‘dark figure’ of unreported illegal harm is likely to be extensive.
2. Harmful activity that is currently legal and socially acceptable (for example, slaughter of animals within current welfare guidelines) is outside the scope of this report.
3. Some important consequences of animal harm – for example, harms to animal victims, humans and wider society – cannot currently be robustly monetised.

As such, the total number of reported cases is likely to be an underrepresentation of the true scale of animal harm, meaning the full economic impact is also likely to be underestimated.

1.1 Direct costs

Our first report estimates the number of animals illegally harmed to be between 1 million and 4.6 million per year.

From this, monetisable costs were identified across five stakeholder groups: police forces; the criminal justice system (excluding the police); local authorities (excluding the criminal justice system funding); other public agencies; and charities. These groups provided the most robust data that could be modelled with reasonable confidence, although data quality still varied between them.

These stakeholder groups were split into those where costs are predominantly reactive (arising after harm has occurred or been identified, such as enforcement) and those that report a mix of reactive and preventative activities (activities that aim to prevent animal harm from happening in the first place, such as education) and do not always separate out the two in reporting.

Among stakeholders where estimating annual reactive costs was possible, we found the following in 2025/26:³



- **Police forces:** Total costs to police forces of responding to animal-related offences ranged from £70.6 million to £108 million.
- **The criminal justice system (excluding the police):** Total costs to the criminal justice system associated with animal-related prosecutions and sentencing ranged from £14.7 million to £19.5 million.
- **Local authorities (excluding criminal justice system funding):** Local authorities across Great Britain spent between £8.1 million and £13.8 million on animal-welfare activities, including kennelling, veterinary care and rehoming; animal welfare prosecutions; and animal welfare enforcement activity.

Among stakeholders who incur a mix of costs that could not be disaggregated into reactive and preventative, we found the following:

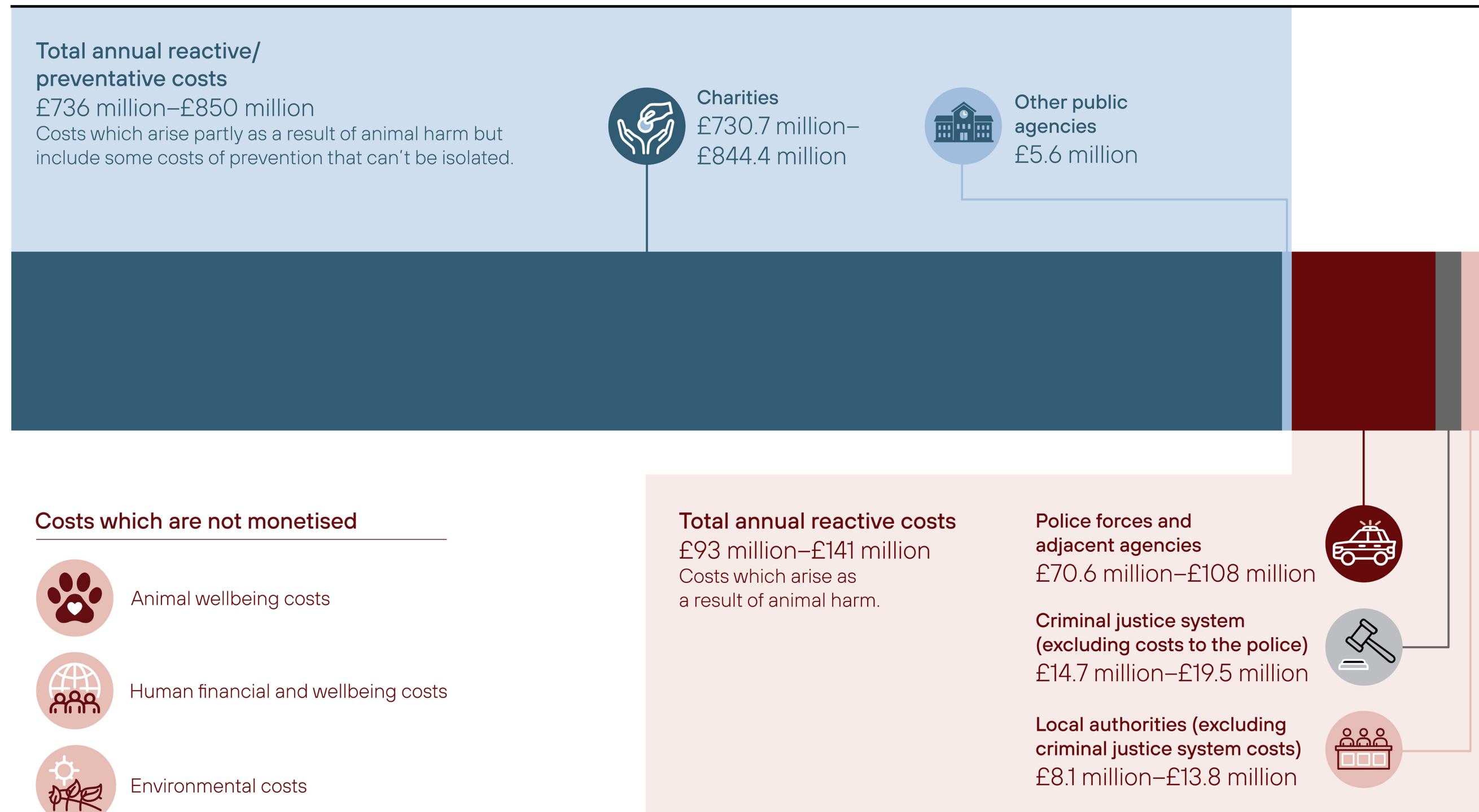
- **Other public agencies:** The cost to other public agencies of monitoring and enforcing animal welfare is up to approximately £5.6 million annually.
- **Charities:** An estimated £730.7 million to £844.4 million annually is spent by charities across Great Britain who directly respond to illegal and legal animal harm, their costs balance immediate crisis response with long-term preventative education and policy work.

Overall, across the areas classified as predominantly reactive, annual costs are estimated to range between £93 million and £141 million. When reactive/preventative costs are included, the selected cost areas considered in this report amount to approximately £830 million to £991 million annually. However, this figure represents a conservative estimate rather than the true total cost of animal harm. Significant data gaps on direct and indirect costs remain as detailed in Section 1.2 below.

More detailed information on how these costs were calculated is outlined in Chapter 4.

Known costs of reported animal harm

Total monetised costs: £830 million–£991 million



Why the true cost may be higher



Many illegal harms are not identified, reported or recorded, which means the 'dark figure' of unreported illegal harm is likely extensive.



Harmful activity that is currently legal and socially acceptable is outside the scope of this report.



1.3 Recommendations

Even with significant data gaps and omissions, the research finds significant levels of costs, **approximately £830 million to £991 million annually**. To build on this, and strengthen the quality of cost data, we make seven headline recommendations, which are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6:

1. **Introduce a common cost-recording framework** across local, devolved and central governmental bodies that monitor and enforce animal welfare. This might involve the relevant enforcement bodies agreeing to a minimum data standard and cost taxonomy. At a minimum, records should enable policy-makers to distinguish animal-welfare enforcement activity from other costs. The framework could be owned and monitored by Defra and the Scottish and Welsh governments jointly, and would enable a more accurate tracking of the direct downstream costs to governments which are the result of animal harm.
2. **Ensure the costs collected via this framework are centrally aggregated and analysed** to support policy- and decision-making. At a more granular level, this data could also be used to identify hotspots and local trends in illegal animal harm, enabling more targeted and cost-effective enforcement. More robust recording would also improve understanding of which offences, against which animal victims, generate the highest cost.
3. **Improve the quality of recording of animal-related offences** and ensure all animal-related crime is made notifiable in England and Wales, allowing for more accurate estimates of the scale and cost of animal harm.
4. **Record prevention, routine assurance and enforcement costs separately to enable a more in-depth analysis of costs associated with animal harm** while helping measure the effectiveness of prevention interventions.
5. **Formally recognise animals as crime victims across all animal offences, to account for the long-term distress and emotional trauma they experience.** This would help ensure their physical and emotional wellbeing is legally protected throughout the enforcement and criminal justice process. This could include accelerating the legal transfer of ownership and collecting financial compensation from perpetrators to ensure the animals' future welfare. The findings highlight that the current system fails to consistently consider animals as victims of harm and, consequently, fails to fully recognise the emotional and wellbeing impacts for animal victims.
6. **Develop supplementary Green Book guidance for the appraisal of material animal-welfare impacts.**⁵ This could be headed by HM Treasury and Defra, jointly with the Animal Sentience Committee.
7. **Establish a central body responsible for directing and coordinating animal-welfare law monitoring and enforcement,** as recommended by the Animal Sentience Committee. This body would work with the police, Defra, local government, other public bodies and charities.⁶

1.2 Wider costs

Outside of these core costs, our scoping identified additional, wider costs of harm that were not included in this report due to being judged as too indirect or currently too difficult to robustly quantify. Those costs are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, and include the following:

- **Animal wellbeing costs:** These are recognised as the most direct costs of animal harm, but cannot be calculated in this report due to the complexity of putting a price on animal loss and pain. However, the report highlights that wellbeing loss and pain has been monetarily quantified for human victims of harm, and there have been methodological developments in calculating wellbeing costs experienced by animals using experimental measures such as Animal Quality-Adjusted Life Years.
- **Human financial and wellbeing costs:** Animal harm can create additional costs for individuals and public services, including veterinary treatment, pet insurance, and healthcare costs arising from injuries. The spread of endemic – infectious illnesses that are constantly present at a baseline level – and zoonotic diseases – infectious illnesses that jump from animals to humans – among wild and farm animals can incur costs in the millions. Endemic diseases in cattle, sheep and pigs, for example, cost farmers more than £300 million every year in financial losses.⁴ We cannot definitively determine how much of these costs are the result of avoidable animal harm. However, this figure helps illustrate the wide-reaching nature of the costs incurred by animal harm. Moreover, exposure to animal abuse can affect the wellbeing of veterinarians, inspectors and animal-welfare staff, with potential consequences for healthcare costs and productivity. Animal harm also co-occurs with wider interpersonal violence and criminality, creating further emotional and financial costs for victims and public services.
- **Environmental costs:** Harms against animals can have environmental costs. For example, illegal harm to wildlife can damage biodiversity, habitats and ecosystems, creating wider environmental consequences and associated costs that extend beyond individual animals or organisations.



2. Introduction and scene-setting

WPI Economics was commissioned by the Animal Welfare Evidence Centre ('The Centre') to undertake research into the scale and cost of animal harm in Great Britain. Although the report looks at Great Britain as a whole, where feasible some of the available data are disaggregated to England and Wales and to Scotland, while other sources are UK-wide. Northern Ireland was excluded from the research due to a legal and enforcement landscape that is very different from the rest of the UK, as this could complicate the measurement of scale and costs of animal harm.

The first report examined the available evidence on the scale of reported illegal harm to animals. This final report builds directly on that analysis by examining the likely economic costs (both quantifiable and non-quantifiable) of responding to animal-related harm across police forces, the criminal justice system (excluding the police), local authorities (excluding the criminal justice system funding), other public agencies, and charities. Given the range of agencies that respond to animal harm, the animal categories captured here are broader and less explicitly defined than in our first report on the scale of animal harm. However, where data on costs has not been possible to capture – for example, costs arising from inspections by the Home Office's Animals in Science Regulation Unit (ASRU) – those animal categories are not included.

The cost-recording methods of some of these organisations fail to differentiate between expenditures driven by reported illegal animal harm and those supporting preventative measures. In those cases, it is impossible to robustly split those costs into 'reactive' and 'preventative'. To ensure transparency, this report splits costs into those that are reactive and those that are reactive/preventative (or mixed). This is discussed in more detail throughout Section 4. The report concludes with recommendations on how our measurement of the cost of animal harm could be improved by better data collection and aggregation.

2.1 Defining animal harm

Both this and the first report adopt a legalistic definition of animal harm, which includes acts or omissions identified in law as intentionally or neglectfully inflicting unnecessary suffering on animals. As explored in the first report, there is no single legal definition of animal abuse or neglect, and animal welfare is a devolved policy issue, which further fragments the legislative landscape. However, despite its inconsistencies and contradictions, the legal framework does offer a helpful basis for defining animal harm for the purpose of measuring the scale and cost. Illegal acts are more systematically recorded than harms that are not illegal, and statutory data on reported offences offers a more reliable picture of scale. For this reason, this report focuses on what legislation deems to be animal harm. For simplicity, unlawful acts of animal harm are referred to hereafter as 'animal harm', 'animal abuse' or 'offences against animals'.

The scope of the definition and thereby data findings is necessarily narrowed to only reported instances of animal abuse. In focusing on reported offences, it should be recognised that

this report can only provide analysis of the most visible harms experienced by animals, as discussed further in Section 3.3. It is important to recognise that much animal harm occurs away from public view and is perpetrated by an animal's guardian(s).

This report discusses the preventative and reactive costs associated with animal harm. Adopting a strict legal definition of animal harm necessitates isolating costs that directly address illegal acts away from broader expenditure on improving animal welfare. While some expenditure can be cleanly categorised as reactive costs (e.g. the criminal justice system), other expenditure includes a mixture of reaction, intervention and prevention (e.g. the operations of many animal welfare charities), as discussed in Chapter 4.

2.2 The scale of animal harm

As outlined in the first report, the true scale of animal harm is likely to be much larger than that reflected in recorded offences.⁷ Even with significant gaps, the available data shows that between 1 million and 4.6 million animals across Great Britain experience illegal harm.

In certain data sources, the number of reports of animal harm are steadily rising. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) reported 269,000 companion animals as experiencing harm in 2025, a 40% increase since 2023. A similar pattern is seen in the number of cases dealt with by other companion animal charities in Great Britain such as Blue Cross and Dogs Trust, which have also seen a rise in cases over the last few years.

Additionally, analysis from the first report estimated that between 830,000 and 3.9 million farmed animals may be harmed in instances as a result of illegal activity each year. For free-living wild animals, this is estimated to be between 12,000 and 34,000 a year. Up to 310,000 captive wild animals live in zoos that have failed at least one assessment criterion during an inspection.

2.3 The cost of animal harm

There is currently no comprehensive assessment of the economic impact of animal harm in the UK. This report addresses this gap by:

- mapping the main costs associated with animal harm and outlining the key data limitations (Chapter 3);
- estimating the costs to the criminal justice system, other public bodies, local government and animal welfare charities (Chapter 4);
- considering the wider costs and impacts that cannot currently be monetised robustly (Chapter 5);
- setting out recommendations for improving the recording and use of animal-harm cost data (Chapter 6).



Case study 1: Operation Ghoul⁸

Animal harm cases can involve long, complex investigations that generate significant costs throughout their duration. This case study indicates the complexity and scale of animal offence cases and the varied, widespread costs associated with this.

In 2021, an RSPCA officer was called to investigate suspicious activity in Essex which seemed to involve animal abuse. The officer noticed worrying signs, including scarring on the dogs' faces and a treadmill in the garden shed.

The RSPCA's Special Operations Unit (SOU) spent months gathering evidence, which eventually led to police involvement, and the rescue of all 19 dogs.

Running from 2021 to 2025, Operation Ghoul turned into an international, multi-defendant dog-fighting investigation that used historical intelligence to identify and prosecute perpetrators. The investigation, spanning England, Ireland and France, involved extensive correspondence, case management, reconnaissance, warrant execution, forensic work, animal transport and court attendance.

Over the four-year period, the investigation required more than 1,550 hours of RSPCA staff time, equivalent to 39 weeks of full time work for one inspector, at an estimated cost of £26,350 in RSPCA SOU and inspectorate staff time alone. This figure does not include costs associated with prosecutions, courts or the wider criminal justice system.

Ultimately, the operation resulted in successful prosecutions of all five defendants, with four receiving custodial sentences. Fifteen of the 19 dogs were successfully rehabilitated and found their forever homes.



3. The landscape of costs associated with animal harm

3.1 Mapping the costs

As demonstrated in the Operation Ghoul case study, the costs associated with animal harm are complex and widespread. To estimate the total cost of animal harm, all plausible costs to various stakeholders that can reasonably be attributed to animal harm were identified. However, some associated costs are more easily identified and quantified than others. A conservative approach to determining costs was therefore adapted, only including those that could be estimated with sufficient robustness. Our scoping arrived at the following monetisable costs, split across five stakeholder groups (dictated by which data are collected and reported, and by whom, as well as where economic costing can be applied).

Table 1: Stakeholder groups included in costing.

Policing	
Policing agencies	Costs associated with enforcing animal welfare offences.
Criminal justice system (excluding the police)	
Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) & Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)	Costs associated with animal-related prosecutions and, in case of COPFS, investigations.
Courts & judicial system	Judicial resources required to process animal welfare prosecutions.
Prosecutions	Costs associated with bringing animal harm cases to court.
Legal aid agency	Costs for defendants' legal representation.
Prison and Probation Service	Cost of holding those convicted of animal welfare offences in custody.
Youth Justice Services	Groups co-ordinated by local authorities who supervise children through the criminal justice system process.
Local government (excluding criminal justice system funding)	
Local authorities	Salaries for staff enforcing animal welfare, costs associated with retrieving harmed animals, care and placement of animals removed from harm (including contracted services), and prosecution of animal welfare breaches.
Other public agencies	
Food Standards Agency (FSA) & Food Standards Scotland (FSS)	Cost of monitoring, inspections compliance and enforcement of animal welfare regulations.
Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) & Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra).	Cost of monitoring, inspections compliance and enforcement of animal welfare regulations.

Table 1: Stakeholder groups included in costing (continued).

Other public agencies (continued)	
Natural England, NatureScot & Natural Resources Wales	Cost of monitoring, inspections compliance and enforcement of animal welfare regulations.
Charities	
Animal welfare charities	Individuals' contributions to animal charities' operations via donations. Operating costs for investigation, prosecution support, rescue, veterinary care, rehabilitation, and rehoming.

Outside of the core costs detailed in the table above, our scoping identified additional, wider impacts of animal harm that were not included in the costings analysis because they were judged to be too indirect or currently too difficult to quantify robustly. These are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 and include:

- animal wellbeing costs
- human financial and wellbeing costs
- environmental costs.

3.2 Sourcing the data

To estimate the costs for each of the agencies and groups, a multi-source approach was adopted, combining Freedom of Information (FOI) requests with direct stakeholder engagement and publicly available data.⁹

FOI requests were submitted to local government, central government departments and police forces to access non-public cost data including staff costs, expenditure on contracted services, and enforcement costs. In total, FOI requests were submitted to 261 organisations: 207 local authorities; 44 police forces; and 10 other public bodies (see Appendix 7.2.1 for list of public bodies). Useful context and data was also acquired from Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and NatureScot outside of the FOI process (this is detailed further in Section 7.3 in the methodology). All governmental agencies responded to our requests, but only some were able to provide us with usable data. A total of 140 (68%) local authorities and 18 (41%) police forces across Great Britain responded with data; however, forces that provided incomplete data were removed, resulting in data from 15 of 44 police forces (34%) informing the costing analysis. Similarly, due to data unavailability, only 58% (n = 120) of local authorities reported data that was used in the costing analysis. All organisations that responded to our request but were unable to share data identified the reason as the data not being recorded at the required level of detail and/or requests exceeding the cost limit.

Data collected via FOI requests comprised the majority of cost data. Publicly available data sources supplemented these stakeholder costs and provided the majority of the cost data for

charities and organisations. Costs to the criminal justice system and other public bodies had the highest degree of publicly available data among stakeholders. For example, data on the courts and legal costs is published by the Ministry of Justice, HM Courts & Tribunals Service, and HM Prison and Probation Service.

In England and Wales, registered charities are required to publish a trustees' annual report and financial accounts, meaning charities' financial data are publicly available. This makes it possible to estimate the costs to charities as a result of animal harm via expenditure on charitable activities and costs to individuals via charitable donations. A separate charities register exists for Scotland, but data from that register has not been used in this report. This is primarily because a number of important charities – such as Dogs Trust and the PDSA – list on both registers, creating the risk of double counting. Instead, Scotland has been accounted for by uprating the cost estimates based on the English and Wales charity register using population data to generate a whole of Great Britain estimate. Though it is recognised this assumptions-driven approach assumes that charity costs in England and Wales are a representative sample of charity costs across Great Britain, it was determined that it was the best way to handle the overlapping datasets.

3.3 Data limitations

Like scale, the cost of animal harm is inherently difficult to quantify because it depends on having a reliable picture of how much harm is taking place. The first report found that recorded data captures only a fraction of animal harm, as animals cannot report their own harm, and this harm typically takes place in private or remote settings. Report- and inspection-based datasets therefore contain a substantial 'dark figure' of unidentified and unrecorded harm. This creates gaps in coverage as well as risks of overlap and double-counting. Many animal-related offences, particularly wildlife offences, are also non-notifiable and are not recorded or reported nationally to the same standard as notifiable crime. This means that even police recording systems and official statistics released by the Home Office are likely to underrepresent the true extent of animal harm.

There are further gaps between an incident being reported and its eventual outcome. The first report identified substantial attrition between reports, investigations, enforcement action, prosecutions and convictions, meaning later-stage criminal justice data captures only a small subset of the harm initially identified. In addition, many datasets record incidents rather than the number of individual animals affected. This is particularly significant for farmed and wild animals, where a single incident may involve many animals. Data on species, severity and outcomes can be missing, while some official figures are narrowly defined or not routinely published. The first report therefore presented revisable ranges rather than a single definitive estimate of the number of animals harmed.

These limitations carry through into the cost analysis. If the number of incidents, animals affected and enforcement responses cannot be observed consistently, neither can all



detailed expenditure on animal-welfare assurance and monitoring, whereas APHA and Defra could provide only highly aggregated financial information covering a much broader range of activity.

These differences have two important consequences:

1. The estimates are not equally precise across all cost areas. Some are derived directly from reported expenditure, while others rely more heavily on extrapolation, proxy costs or assumptions about the share of activity attributable to animal harm. This uncertainty means that relatively small changes in those assumptions can produce materially different results.
2. Even where cost data are available, it can be difficult to determine what proportion should be attributed specifically to animal harm. Animal welfare charities, for example, provide a range of services beyond responding directly to cruelty and neglect. Similarly, expenditure on routine monitoring and assurance would not disappear entirely even if animal harm was eradicated.

Taken together, these limitations mean the figures in this report are best understood as the lower bound estimate of the resources attributable to responding to animal harm. Some categories are presented as plausible ranges rather than single estimates, reflecting variation in activity and expenditure, uncertainty in attribution and extrapolation, and limited data availability and quality.

A further challenge is distinguishing reactive costs from preventative expenditure. Most of the agencies' costs that can be quantified with greatest confidence are reactive. However, for some other cost categories, the distinction between reactive and preventative costs is less clear. For some organisations, the cost of monitoring, inspection, licensing, assurance and some charitable activity is recorded alongside costs of responding to animal harm. This means the cost of activity that helps prevent harm is not distinguishable from the cost of responding to animal harm once it has occurred. This makes attribution difficult. Including the full cost of these activities may overstate the expenditure caused directly by animal harm, while excluding them entirely would understate the resources required to enforce animal harm legislation and respond to illegal activity.

To reflect these differences, Chapter 4 considers each of the selected cost areas in terms of whether that expenditure is predominantly reactive or includes a meaningful mix of preventative and reactive activity. This distinction is important when interpreting the estimates, particularly in cases where organisations do not record these functions separately.

associated costs. In addition to these inherited limitations around scale, there is a further set of cost-specific challenges. No organisation or dataset records the full expenditure involved in preventing, identifying and responding to animal harm. Estimates were therefore constructed from FOI responses, published accounts, administrative data, unit-cost estimates and modelling assumptions, with the method for each cost area determined by the available evidence.

This patchwork reflects substantial differences in how organisations record expenditure. Our FOI requests found that local authorities categorise animal-welfare costs inconsistently, while police forces generally do not record expenditure against specific offences and were therefore only able to provide information on offence volumes. The FSA provided relatively



4. Estimating the costs associated with animal harm

This section examines the costs associated with animal harm, split by costs that can be described as reactive (that is, arising as a result of animal harm) and reactive/preventative (that is, costs that are partly incurred as a result of responding to animal harm and partly as a result of animal harm prevention; however, data quality and reporting do not allow those two strands to be distinguished). Costs are grouped by the following:

- Reactive costs, which comprise:
 - costs to police;
 - costs to the criminal justice system (excluding the police);
 - costs to local authorities (excluding the criminal justice system).
- Reactive/preventative costs, which comprise:
 - costs to other public agencies;
 - costs to charities.

4.1 Reactive costs

This section discusses the costs of reported illegal animal harm where data quality allows us to isolate the cost of reacting to illegal activity from the cost of preventing illegal activity. This means the costs discussed in this section can be understood to overwhelmingly reflect the downstream cost of animal harm.

4.1.1 Costs to police forces and adjacent agencies across Great Britain

Key findings

- Police and related enforcement bodies responding to **41,500** animal-related crimes across Great Britain costs between **£51.2 million** and **£75.7 million** annually.
- Kennelling and veterinary costs associated with the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 increases the estimated range to approximately **£70.6 million** to **£108.0 million**.
- Cost per incident is approximately from **£1,700** to **£2,600**.

Police forces in the UK are responsible for responding to crimes against animals. The first report estimated that around 100,000 animal-related incidents were reported to police forces across Great Britain in 2025/26, with around 41,500 recorded as offences.¹⁰ This report uses those volume estimates as the starting point for estimating the cost of the police response.

Police costs estimated in this section are overwhelmingly reactive, reflecting the resources used to respond to animal-related offences once they have occurred. However, a small

proportion of the estimated cost, particularly expenditure through the National Wildlife Crime Unit and National Rural Crime Network, will include preventative activity such as education and awareness-raising. There is also a wider preventative dimension to enforcement, as effective investigation and enforcement may deter future animal-related offending.

Methodology and data robustness

There is no single source showing how much police forces spend responding to animal abuse, and no police force responding to our FOI requests was able to provide a direct cost estimate at this level. Instead, the costs were estimated using the following methods:

- Estimating the volume and mix of animal-related police activity using detailed FOI responses from 18 police forces across Great Britain with information on recorded animal-related offences, incidents and their outcomes.¹¹ The unit costs of criminal offences vary by offence type, reflecting differences in the resources needed to respond to offences ranging from the relatively minor to the more severe. For example, the Police Activity Survey estimates the unit cost of violence with injury at between £1,224 and £1,756, while the unit cost of theft is estimated at between £249 and £476. Mapping these crime category costs to scale data on similar offences against animals, it could be estimated that animal-related crimes cost police forces in England and Wales between £249 and £4,442 per incident.
- For Scotland, applying the equivalent England and Wales unit costs to Scottish offence volumes, as equivalent estimates are not available for Scotland.
- Including some costs that sit outside individual police forces, including expenditure through the National Wildlife Crime Unit, relevant activity within the National Rural Crime Network, as well as an estimate of the cost to the Marine Management Organisation and the Environment Agency of dealing with fishing and marine wildlife offences. Various data robustness considerations related to these organisations are detailed in the ‘Methodology and data robustness’ column in Table 2.

Some organisations that may incur costs as a result of animal harm are not included in the costing due to lack of sufficient information that would allow for a robust estimation. Most notably, Border Force undertakes seizures of illegal imports of living animals under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The first report on the scale of animal harm noted 2,600 animals were seized in 2025.¹² However, Border Force costs are not reported against specific activities. Since live animal seizures make up a relatively small proportion of overall seizures under CITES, which in turn make up a small proportion of Border Force operations, a meaningful estimation of cost would be very difficult. Moreover, Border Force seeks to recover some of the costs, which would further complicate this estimation.

Results

In total, it is estimated that responding to animal-related crime costs police forces and related enforcement bodies between £51.2 million and £75.7 million. This is before accounting for the significant additional costs, such as kennelling and veterinary costs, associated with the enforcement of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.¹³ Including estimated kennelling and veterinary costs associated with the ban increases the estimated range to be from approximately £70.6 million to £108.0 million. Given these costs reflect 41,500 underlying offences, this means an average offence costs from approximately £1,700 to £2,600. Table 2 below outlines the estimated cost to police forces and adjacent agencies across Great Britain.

Table 2: Overall cost to police and adjacent agencies ¹⁴

Geography	Cost type	Cost estimate	Methodology and data robustness
England and Wales	Police costs of responding to recorded offences, 2025/26 (2026 prices)	£47,590,000 – £70,190,000	Based on FOI crime volumes and an established cost methodology. Robust, but many animal-related offences go unrecorded (see Section 3.3).
Scotland	Police costs of responding to recorded offences, 2025/26 (2026 prices)	£2,000,000 – £3,430,000	Based on Police Scotland recorded crime, which is highly robust, with England and Wales unit costs applied.
England and Wales	Additional cost of responding to fishing offences borne by other organisations, 2025 (2026 prices)	£640,000 – £1,100,000	Based on conservative offence estimates ¹⁵ and might therefore be an underestimate of the true cost.
Great Britain	National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) budget funded by several UK government agencies as well as the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC), 2026/27	£ 880,000	Supplied by the NPCC, with 95% attributed to Great Britain. Very robust, but may include preventative elements.
Great Britain	National Rural Crime Network (NRCN) livestock coordinator role inc. salary, hire vehicle, fuel, etc., ¹⁶ funded by NFU Mutual, 2025/26 (2026 prices)	£50,000	Supplied by the NPCC, with 95% attributed to Great Britain. Very robust, but may include preventative elements.
Great Britain	Cost of kennelling and veterinary bills associated with the enforcement of the Dangerous Dogs Act, 2024/25 (2026 prices)	£19,400,000 ¹⁷ – £32,330,000 ¹⁸	Based on NPCC projected costs of kennelling and veterinary bills. Uncertainty is high and the figure may overlap with police response costs, above. ¹⁹
Great Britain	TOTAL (assuming no overlap)	£70,600,000 – £108,000,000	

4.1.2 Costs to the criminal justice system (excluding the police)

Key findings

- Approximately **3,900** animal-related prosecutions are generating costs of **£14.66 million to £19.5 million** across the justice system.
- The average prosecution costs approximately **£3,760 to £5,000**.

The first report identified approximately 3,700 animal-related prosecutions in England and Wales in 2025 and estimated at least 200 further prosecutions annually in Scotland, giving a rounded total of around 3,900 prosecutions across Great Britain.²⁰

Costs to the criminal justice system are predominantly reactive, arising once an animal-related offence has progressed onto prosecution, court proceedings or sentencing. However, there is also a potential preventative effect, as successful prosecution and sentencing may deter future offending by both the individual concerned and others.

Methodology and data robustness

As set out in Figure 1, criminal justice system costs are incurred across various bodies and services, including courts (where prosecutions and sentencing take place), prisons (where prisoners are housed), the Probation Service, legal aid support, Youth Justice Services, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in England and Wales²¹ and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) in Scotland.²²

Figure 1: Criminal justice system costs overview



To estimate the range of criminal justice system costs, publicly available data on the prosecution scale estimates, publicly available data on costs borne across those functions, as well as some FOI responses provided by various bodies, were considered. A more detailed summary of our approach can be found in the Technical Annex (Section 7); various data robustness considerations are also detailed in the ‘Methodology and data robustness’ column in Table 3.

Results

Overall, our modelling suggests that the estimated annual 3,900 animal-related prosecutions across England, Wales and Scotland generate costs of approximately £14.66 million to £19.5 million across these bodies and services. Given these costs reflect 3,900 underlying prosecutions, this means an average prosecution costs approximately £3,760 to £5,000.

Table 3: Annual costs to the criminal justice system based on 3,900 prosecutions reported in 2025²³

Cost area	Estimated annual cost	Methodology and data robustness
Magistrates’ courts and the Crown Court (including jury service) – England and Wales, 2025 (2025/26 prices)	£2,460,000 – £3,000,000	Modelled from Ministry of Justice (MoJ) court volumes and average cost per case.
Legal aid – England and Wales, 2025 (2025/26 prices)	£2,820,000 – £3,450,000	Modelled from legal aid spend, apportioned by animal-related share of court cases.
Prison – England and Wales, 2025 (2025/26 prices)	£1,540,000 – £1,880,000	Modelled from MoJ sentencing data and average cost per prisoner.
Probation – England and Wales, 2025 (2025/26 prices)	£3,310,000 – £4,040,000	Modelled from MoJ sentencing data and average probation caseload costs.
Youth Justice Services – England and Wales, 2025/26 (2025/26 prices)	£260,000 – £510,000	Modelled from MoJ proceedings data and average costs per offence.
CPS – England and Wales, 2025 (2025/26 prices)	£2,920,000 – £4,860,000	Modelled from MoJ proceedings data and average CPS cost per case.
Courts, legal aid, prison and probation, Youth Justice Services – Scotland, 2025 (2025/26 prices)	£560,000 – £700,000	England and Wales estimates scaled to Scottish prosecution volumes.
COPFS – Scotland*, 2025/26 (2025/26 prices)	£800,000 – £1,060,000	FOI data on wildlife cases plus modelled companion animal cases.
Great Britain TOTAL	£14,700,000 – £19,500,000	

* Please note that the large differences between COPFS and CPS costs can be explained by differences in their roles. While the CPS is primarily a prosecuting authority that does not investigate crimes,²⁴ COPFS is likely to play a more direct role in investigations for some offences.²⁵ Moreover, while the RSPCA prosecutes the majority of cases under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA) does not prosecute and instead refers cases to COPFS, meaning the higher volume of prosecutions in England and Wales does not directly translate into a higher relative workload for CPS. It is also worth noting that these estimates use different underlying methodologies, with COPFS estimates relying on data that was supplied by COPFS directly. CPS was not able to provide equivalent estimates upon request, and the cost figure relies on assumptions informed by desk research.

4.1.3 Costs to local government (excluding the criminal justice system)

Key findings

- In 2025/26, local authorities incurred an estimated **£8.06 million to £13.80 million** in animal welfare-related costs.

Local authorities are responsible for enforcing animal welfare in licensing-related activities, including animal boarding establishments, pet shops and zoos, alongside responding to local stray animals²⁶ and the welfare of farmed animals while on farms.²⁷

Costs to local authorities cover four categories that are predominantly reactive in nature:

- The cost of contracted services related to animal welfare such as kennelling, veterinary care, or rehoming;
- The cost of court fees, legal representation, and other prosecution-related legal expenses arising from animal welfare enforcement;
- The staff wages and other costs associated with the enforcement of animal welfare;
- Other enforcement costs that are not otherwise captured.

Although some staff and enforcement costs may also include an element of routine monitoring or preventative activity, the FOI request (see section 7.2.4 in the Technical Annex) responses from local authorities focused primarily on reactive costs (such as kennelling and enforcement), and we have therefore grouped local government costs under that category.

Methodology and data robustness

The costs estimated below have been modelled based on responses to FOI requests submitted to local authorities across England, Scotland and Wales with a response rate of 58% (n =120) of local authorities providing usable data. The costs outlined in FOI responses have been summed and extrapolated to account for local authorities that have not responded. A detailed explanation of methodology behind this modelling is presented in section 7.2.4 in the Technical Annex.

Results

Between 2023/24 and 2025/26, local authorities incurred an estimated £30 million in animal welfare-related costs. On average, this is £10 million a year. A breakdown of cost estimates is presented in table 4, showing values for each nation and across Great Britain. The costs are presented as a distribution, with 25th percentile, 75th percentile and median (50th percentile) values. The different percentile estimates are derived from the modelling and vary depending on the cost estimate assigned to local authorities that failed to report usable data. For more information on the method, see section 7.2.4 in the Technical Annex.

Table 4: Local authority animal welfare costs for 2025/26 by country, 25th percentile, 75th percentile and median

Region	25th percentile	75th percentile	Median
England	£5,230,000	£9,320,000	£6,750,000
Scotland	£1,260,000	£2,460,000	£1,450,000
Wales	£1,570,000	£2,040,000	£1,800,000
Great Britain TOTAL	£8,060,000	£13,800,000	£10,000,000

4.2 Reactive/preventative costs

This section describes costs where current reporting or recording of budgets does not allow us to neatly differentiate between costs that arise as a result of illegal activity (reactive costs) and costs that arise in attempts to prevent illegal activity (preventative costs). Through this section, reactive/preventative costs are referred to as ‘mixed’ costs.

4.2.1 Costs to other public agencies

Key findings

- The FSA, FSS, APHA, Natural England, NatureScot and Natural Resources Wales, together spend up to **£5.6 million** addressing animal harm.

The first report also showed that, beyond the police and criminal justice system, a range of agencies are funded by the central government to tackle animal-related offences through monitoring, inspection and enforcement activities.²⁸ This includes the FSA and FSS, which are responsible for the enforcement of animal welfare standards at UK slaughterhouses; the APHA, the executive arm of Defra, which undertakes a wide range of activities including inspecting farmed animal welfare complaints; and Natural England, NatureScot and Natural Resources Wales, organisations that protect and regulate wildlife and landscapes.

Costs incurred by other public bodies are best understood as mixed because monitoring, licensing, assurance and enforcement activities are often reported together rather than separated by purpose. As a result, these figures are likely to capture both reactive costs associated with identified animal harm and preventative activity intended to reduce the risk of harm occurring in the first place.

Methodology and data robustness

There is variation in the available cost evidence across these organisations. Where available, our cost estimates are based on data supplied to us via request (for FSA, FSS and Natural

England). In other cases, assumptions based on available data from the latest available annual accounting returns of those organisations were used. The different considerations are detailed in the ‘Methodology and data robustness’ column in Table 5.

Results

Overall, our modelling suggests that, across all of these agencies, the upper band of costs totals approximately £5.6 million in the latest available annual data. Around one half of this cost results from approximately £3.2 million in ‘under-recovered’ costs for APHA which are, ultimately, borne by the UK Government.

Table 5: Costs to other public agencies

Cost area	Estimated annual cost	Methodology and data robustness
FSA, 2025/26	£780,000	Based on FOI data on the Welfare Assurance Team, checks, serving and defending, enforcement action and prosecutions. Mixed cost, as reactive spend cannot be fully separated from routine checks.
FSS, 2025/26	£130,000	Based on FOI data covering inspection, verification, enforcement, data provision, training, stakeholder liaison and veterinary services. Mixed cost, as preventative and reactive spend are reported together.
APHA, 2024/25 (2025/26 prices)	£3,220,000	Based on data from APHA annual accounts. APHA does not record costs by activity so the figure covers a broader range of animal-health activity. Mixed cost, mainly preventative and regulatory.
Natural England, 2025/26	£630,000	Based on compliance and enforcement cost data supplied. Mixed cost, spanning monitoring, licensing and enforcement.
Natural Resources Wales, 2025/26	£670,000	Applied the proportion of Natural England’s overall budget spent on compliance and enforcement to Natural Resources Wales’ budget. Likely a mixed cost.
NatureScot, 2024/25 (2025/26 prices)	£180,000	Applied the proportion of Natural England’s overall budget spent on compliance and enforcement to NatureScot’s budget. Likely a mixed cost.
Great Britain TOTAL	Approximately £5,600,000	

4.2.2 Costs to charities

Key findings:

- Annual expenditure of animal welfare charities in Great Britain that are focused on response to harm totals around **£730.7 million**.
- Including selected international charities with UK operations increases these estimates to approximately **£844.4 million**.

As outlined in the first report, the scale of demand in the charitable sector is substantial. Animal welfare charities support thousands of animals each year, while wildlife organisations record thousands of incidents of suspected harm. For example, reports of potential harm made to the RSPCA and Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA) alone concerned around 330,000 companion animals annually, while the Wildlife and Countryside Link brought together 4,819 reported wildlife-crime incidents in 2024.²⁹

The scale of this demand means animal welfare charities devote substantial resources to preventing cruelty, responding to cases of abuse, and caring for animals affected by harm. However, there is no comprehensive dataset showing how much of this activity, or its associated cost, is directly attributable to animal abuse.

Methodology and data robustness

The scale of costs to charities was estimated using financial information from the Charity Commission’s Register of Charities to identify relevant charities with substantial operations in Great Britain. Charities were selected where at least part of their work directly responds to animal harm, for example through sanctuary, medical care or rehoming services. This includes organisations such as the RSPCA, Dogs Trust, Cats Protection and Brooke Hospital for Animals. Organisations whose work is focused more broadly on animal welfare or conservation were excluded. However, even among those charities selected, preventative work that is intended to reduce future harm, such as education and campaigning, makes up an important element of the work they undertake. As a result, the charity costs are best understood as mixed, but likely lean towards reactive costs.

Detailed financial information was then collected for charities with annual incomes above £1 million. This was supplemented with modelling (detailed in the Technical Annex, 7.2.6) to account for the income and expenditure of the large number of smaller charities with income below £1 million. For charities with incomes above £1 million, data on income and expenditure was broken down into further categories (such as income due to donations, or expenditure due to charitable activities). For charities with incomes below £1 million, only overall headline income and expenditure data was retrieved, with further breakdowns into donation income and charitable activity expenditure estimated by drawing on proportions

observed in the detailed income and expenditure data recorded for charities with incomes greater than £1 million. The data for charities with incomes above £1 million (complete with further breakdowns), and the data for charities with incomes below £1 million (with estimated breakdowns to donation income and charitable activity expenditure), were combined and used together during the rest of the analysis.

Two separate cost measures were considered for this analysis:

- **Donations and legacies**, providing an indication of the financial contribution made by individuals to support this activity.
- **Expenditure on charitable activities**, providing a measure of the resources charities themselves use to deliver their work.

Results

For charities primarily focused on Great Britain, it is estimated that annual expenditure totals around £730.7 million on charitable activities, alongside around £819.6 million received through donations and legacies. Including selected international charities with UK operations increases these estimates to approximately £844.4 million of charitable expenditure and £943.2 million of donations and legacies.³⁰ For a discussion of methodology and robustness, please see the ‘Methodology and data robustness’ sub-heading above.

The scale of these numbers makes it clear just how important charities are for animal welfare enforcement and reducing animal harm. As exemplified by the Operation Earth case study, charities absorb responsibilities and respond to needs that are not being met elsewhere in the system. Without the activities of the charities analysed in this section, the ongoing need to enforce animal welfare legislation, and the costs of reducing animal harm and suffering, could overwhelm public bodies and leave animals without the protections and assistance to which they are legally entitled and deserve.

Table 6: Charity costs

Cost estimate–with international charities		Cost estimate–without international charities	
Donations	Charitable activity expenditure	Donations	Charitable activity expenditure
£943,200,000	£844,400,000	£819,600,000	£730,700,000

Case study 2: Operation Earth³¹

British charities such as the RSPCA play a critical role in responding to animal welfare offences, and incur significant costs in investigating illegal activity that results in harm to animals.

A recent example of this is Operation Earth, an RSPCA investigation into illegal dog trading across various locations. Eleven perpetrators, all from the same family, operated an illegal puppy-selling business using multiple properties, vehicles, vet practices and phone numbers, predominantly in the Newport area of Wales.

The group made over £300,000 in sales through the use of false advertising that led buyers to believe the puppies were home-bred, well-socialised family pets, when in fact, some were bred in sheds, purchased from third-party sellers, or even stolen.

The investigation identified 41 residential addresses, 47 mobile numbers and 39 email addresses that were used by the perpetrators to sell at least 40 breeds of dog. The puppies were publicly advertised on major pet-selling websites. The investigation brought together a number of animal welfare and law enforcement agencies, including Gwent police force, veterinary practices, Newport Trading Standards and APHA.

All 11 defendants were found guilty under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, with six receiving prison sentences.

Over the life cycle of the case, a total of £14,749 was spent on human resource, vet bills, and forensics by the RSPCA alone. The table below breaks down the total RSPCA costs associated with this investigation.

Cost	Expense
RSPCA staff time	£6,904.67
Hotel accommodation and meal expenses for RSPCA Special Operations Unit officers in-field	£621.10
Vet bills for seized dogs	£5,123.48
Forensics	£2,100
Total	£14,749

This case study shows how resource-intensive animal welfare investigations can be. Such undertakings use up a significant amount of financial and human resources to complete.

4.3 Summarising the quantifiable economic cost of animal harm

This chapter has shown that animal harm is associated with substantial costs across public services, agencies and charities. Across the areas classified as predominantly reactive, annual costs are estimated to range **between £93 million and £141 million**. This includes £70.6 million to £108 million in policing costs, £14.7 million to £19.5 million across the criminal justice system, and £8.1 million to £13.8 million incurred by local authorities.

When mixed costs from wider public agencies (£5.6 million) and Great Britain-focused charity expenditure (£730.7 million to £844.4 million) are included, the selected cost areas considered in this report amount to **approximately £830 million to £991 million annually**. However, this figure is likely to overstate the expenditure attributable specifically to recorded offences against animals because the mixed categories (especially costs to charities) include preventative activity that would continue to some extent even in the absence of identified abuse or neglect.

Moreover, the costs discussed in this chapter should not be interpreted as a comprehensive estimate of the full economic cost of animal harm. Rather, they provide a partial estimate of the costs that can currently be identified and quantified with reasonable confidence. This is discussed further in Section 3.3: Data limitations.

Table 7: Annual costs summary

Cost area	Estimated annual cost
Police forces and adjacent agencies	£70.6 million – £108 million
Criminal justice system (excluding costs to the police)	£14.7 million – £19.5 million
Local authorities (excluding criminal justice system costs)	£8.1 million – £13.8 million
TOTAL REACTIVE COST	£93 million – £141 million
Other public agencies	£5.6 million
Charities	£730.7 million–£844.4 million
TOTAL REACTIVE / PREVENTATIVE COST	£736 million–£850 million
TOTAL COST OVERALL	£830 million–£991 million





5. Wider costs and impacts

Some of the most important consequences of animal harm cannot currently be robustly monetised. Most notably, this applies to the direct harm experienced by animals themselves as victims, including pain, suffering, distress and loss of wellbeing and life. While these are central consequences of animal harm, there is no widely established or sufficiently robust methodology for converting them into an economic cost that could be included alongside the expenditure estimates in this report.

There are also broader and, at times, indirect costs affecting individuals, society and the environment. These are often harder to attribute to a specific stakeholder or incident, and the available evidence does not always allow them to be quantified consistently. The key areas identified through our research are outlined below.

5.1 Animal wellbeing

There are established approaches for valuing the consequences of harm to human victims, including Home Office estimates of the economic and social costs of crime, domestic abuse and fraud,³² which monetise the physical and emotional harm and reductions in quality of life guided by wellbeing valuation approaches set out in the Green Book.³³ These approaches cannot readily be extended to animals. Doing so would require robust evidence on the severity and duration of different forms of suffering, their effect on an animal's quality of life, and how those effects should be compared across species and ultimately assigned an economic value.

Emerging evidence proposes Animal Quality-Adjusted Life Years (AQALYs) – a metric that combines the quality and duration of an animal's life into a single welfare measure, including recognising that some welfare states are considered worse than death. The monetary value of a human QALY is based on a Willingness to Pay methodology, whereby people express a willingness to pay to avoid an injury that would result in a reduction in the length or quality of their life. Given animals cannot express their Willingness to Pay, extending this methodology to them is very challenging.³⁴

Espinosa et al. (2025) have recently attempted to set out a theoretical metric for AQALY based on the Five Domains Model.³⁵ However, monetisation of AQALYs is a relatively under-researched, experimental area. Some approaches do this based on the 'utility potential' of different animals, using cortical neuron count as a proxy to scale down the monetary value of a human QALY to an AQALY for different animals.³⁶ However, this approach to quantifying animal sentience and welfare remains experimental and lacks precedent in economic valuation. In particular, using cortical neurons to assign utility potential to sentient beings introduces problematic implications of assigning higher value based on higher intelligence.



Medical records of rescued animals are not readily available in a standardised format. This makes it difficult to reliably calculate 'excess' costs that arise from animal harm, as opposed to naturally occurring disease or prevention of illness. However, adjacent figures on the cost of rehoming and treating animals can give an idea of how much this would cost. As highlighted in the Operation Earth case study, a single illegal puppy smuggling investigation cost the RSPCA over £5,000 in veterinary bills for the seized animals. Increased pet insurance premiums as a result of animal harm were also identified as a potential cost to individuals. Although there is limited data on increased insurance premiums as a result of animal harm, available data shows the average vet claim to be £685. The RSPCA notes that animals who are victims of harm need longer and more complex rehabilitation, which is more costly.⁴¹ Therefore, it would be reasonable to assume that vet claims for animals who are victims of harm would be above the £685 average.

5.2.2 Human wellbeing

As mentioned above, there is established precedent for using QALY approaches to estimate the economic value of emotional and wellbeing harms in a wide range of contexts such as crime, fraud or domestic abuse.

As such, there is also a case for considering the cost of animal harm in relation to human health and wellbeing. Frontline workers such as veterinarians, enforcement agents and animal welfare staff likely experience negative wellbeing impacts from exposure to cases of animal harm.⁴² Exposure to animal suffering and difficult treatment decisions have a negative impact on the wellbeing of veterinary doctors.⁴³ As well as the costs of wellbeing itself, this cost can also materialise as lost productivity and increased healthcare spend.

There is evidence of an association between animal abuse and interpersonal violence, with both forms of violence often co-occurring as part of a wider pattern of harmful or criminal behaviour.⁴⁴ For example, a correlational relationship exists between animal harm and domestic abuse, with nearly 9 in 10 domestic abuse professionals having witnessed cases where an animal is also being abused.⁴⁵ Despite difficulty in establishing a causal link between the two,⁴⁶ it is likely that animal harm within interpersonal violence generates downstream costs to the NHS, social services, the police and the criminal justice system.

Abused and neglected animals may be more likely to harm humans, resulting in an increased cost to the NHS. For example, McMillan and colleagues found that 69 dogs who had a history of being abused displayed higher rates of aggression and fear towards unfamiliar humans and dogs than a comparator group of over 5,000 companion dogs.⁴⁷ Similarly, a newer study found that adverse experiences in a dog's early life, such as abuse, was associated with increased aggression in adulthood.⁴⁸ While significant and impactful, these indirect costs are not reflected in the animal-welfare-specific costs estimated, as they are too difficult to directly attribute to animal harm.

To ensure the robustness of our modelling, the analysis focuses on costs borne by humans. However, the impacts on animals are gaining increasing recognition among policy-makers. The 2026 edition of the Green Book explicitly states that practitioners should consider the effects on the welfare of wild and domesticated animals in appraisal (under the Natural Environment guidance), and that the Animal Sentience Committee can examine any policy decision made by UK government ministers.³⁷ However, the guidance stops short of recommending a quantitative approach.

5.2. Human financial and wellbeing costs

5.2.1 Human financial costs

Increased veterinary bills were identified as a cost borne by individuals as a result of animal harm. Animal harm can impose costs on veterinary services and the public healthcare system in a range of ways, including treatment of animals who have sustained injuries as a result of abuse,³⁸ dog bites on animals and people due to poorly controlled animals,³⁹ and the cost of treating diseases spreading among animals and humans (e.g. zoonotic diseases) as a result of neglect and biosecurity risks linked to offences against animals. The spread of endemic and zoonotic diseases among wild and farm animals can incur costs in the millions. Endemic diseases in cattle, sheep and pigs, for example, cost farmers more than £300 million every year in financial losses.⁴⁰ We cannot definitively determine how much of these costs are the result of avoidable animal harm. However, this figure helps illustrate the wide-reaching nature of the costs incurred by animal harm.

5.3 Environmental costs

The issue of animal harm overlaps with environmental harm. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) identifies direct exploitation of organisms, including hunting, fishing and harvesting, as one of the five primary drivers of global biodiversity loss.⁴⁹ This has significant potential to harm related natural processes, including those affecting climate.⁵⁰

This is relevant to environmental conservation in Great Britain. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) records over 900 confirmed incidents of raptor persecution in the UK between 2015 and 2024. Since predators form an important part of wider ecological networks, sustained persecution may interfere with the functioning of wider ecosystems and lead to environmental damage.⁵¹ Illegal harm to animals may also interfere with nature-based interventions to build climate resilience. This is the case for beavers, which are legally protected in England. Their activity can improve water quality, flood and drought resilience; unlawfully removing those animals undermines these benefits.⁵²

Abandonment and neglect of companion animals can also have environmental consequences. A recent scoping review identified that large-scale puppy farming may involve inadequate disposal of dog waste, food waste, soiled bedding and even dead animals, which can have potential consequences for land and water pollution.⁵³ Similarly, other activities involving animals, such as farming, sport and entertainment can have environmental impacts when done outside legal requirements. However, the results of illegal harm and the consequences of illegal activity that may not result in direct harm to animals may be very difficult to distinguish.

Addressing damage to climates and habitats brought about by illegal animal harm is costly on a regional, national and global scale. Investment into the prevention of animal harm would not only mitigate these costs, but would protect natural landscapes and those who live in them.

5.4 Impact on our estimates

A fully comprehensive assessment of the costs of animal harm would likely include each of the wider categories detailed across Section 5. However, a lack of data, causal research and robust existing methodologies means that those costs have not been included in the quantification of costs in this report.

Given that the costs outlined in Section 5 are excluded, our cost estimates represent a lower bound of the true economic costs. Despite this, we assume some costs not directly attributable to instances of animal harm to be present in our estimates, such as animal welfare charities' expenditures. Overall, it is likely that the true costs of harm are significantly higher, and creating a stronger understanding of these should be a priority for future research.





6. Conclusion and recommendations

An estimated 1 million to 4.6 million animals are illegally harmed each year. Animal welfare organisations, law enforcement, regulators, and members of the public together incur millions in avoidable costs addressing instances of animal harm towards animals.

This report has estimated that reported illegal animal harm is associated with substantial costs across public services, agencies and charities. Across the areas classified as predominantly reactive, annual costs are estimated to range **between £93 million and £141 million**. This includes £70.6 million to £108 million in policing costs, £14.7 million to £19.5 million across the criminal justice system, and £8.1 million to £13.8 million incurred by local authorities.

When mixed costs from wider public agencies (£5.6 million) and Great Britain-focused charity expenditure (£730.7 million to £844.4 million) are included, the selected cost areas considered in this report amount to **approximately £830 million to £991 million annually**. This figure is likely to overstate the expenditure attributable specifically to animal harm because the mixed categories (especially costs to charities) include preventative activity that would continue to some extent even in the absence of identified animal harm. However, even taking this into account, charities are footing a significant portion of the bill for animal welfare enforcement when compared with public bodies. Charities provide a financial safety net which absorbs costs that are not currently met elsewhere in the system. Without their contribution, animal harm costs could overwhelm public bodies, or lead to a situation where harms go unaddressed.

There are also costly wider impacts that occur as a result of animal harm. Most directly, animals experience suffering as a result of harm. However, no established metric exists for monetising harm to animals. In estimating the impact of harm against humans, human suffering is the central element of the estimate. This includes the evidenced relationship between animal abuse and interpersonal violence which may have downstream effects on public service expenditure that have not been monetised in this report. Costs linked to environmental harm – for example, wildlife crime – have costly, detrimental impacts on natural landscapes, biodiversity and thereby humans. Although such impacts cannot accurately be monetised, they are real consequences of the prevalence of animal harm.

These findings are the first attempt to monetise the system-wide cost of illegal offences that result in animal harm in Great Britain, translating a moral concern into a measurable economic reality. Measuring the cost of animal harm is critical for ensuring that prevention and enforcement can be understood and managed. High quality data are crucial for investigating the current state of animal harm, the trends in harm, and approaches that are most effective and cost-efficient in tackling harm. This in turn enables various agencies, including charities, to make more informed policy-making and funding decisions. In particular, uncovering the cost of reactive versus preventative action could help build the case for investment in prevention, which would ultimately lead to a reduction in harm experienced by animals.

This research shows that animal harm places a significant financial burden on both public services and personal finances, and these costs should be used to inform future policy and responses to crime.

The costs quantified in this report are likely to represent only a small proportion of the overall true costs. This is because:

- this report only considers reported incidents which, as highlighted in our scale report,⁵⁴ are likely to be only the tip of the iceberg of all offences;
- the challenges of identifying costs associated with responding to these offences, as explained in detail in Section 3.3; and
- the exclusion of wider costs, such as a monetised cost of animal suffering, as part of the economic costing.

Therefore, it is likely that the true scale and cost of animal harm is much larger than the available data suggests.

Recommendations

The reactive costs identified in this report can be mitigated or even eliminated through targeted intervention into the prevention of animal harm, but informed investment decision-making is reliant on accurate and accessible data. Below, we propose seven key recommendations on strengthening the quality of cost data.

1. Introduce a common cost-recording framework across local, devolved and central governmental bodies that monitor and enforce animal welfare. The framework could be owned and monitored by Defra, and the Scottish and Welsh governments jointly.

- Organisations record animal-related activity at different levels of detail, and some do not record costs against specific activities at all. This is evident in the police and APHA FOI responses, which said they were not able to provide cost details due to lack of data granularity and inaccessible data. Local authority returns also combine staffing, contracted services, legal work and other expenditure in different ways. In contrast, the FSA and FSS were able to provide much more detailed breakdowns, suggesting their approach could provide a useful blueprint for how cost recording could be undertaken by local and central government bodies. This approach would offer a strategic mechanism to alleviate financial pressure on frontline services and help move to a more sustainable and evidence-based approach. Furthermore, shifting the focus towards a more clear distinction between preventative and enforcement costs would enable even more informed decision-making.
- Inconsistent classifications prevent like-for-like comparison, make aggregation difficult and increase reliance on broad assumptions or proxy unit costs. They also create a

risk that differences in reported spending reflect data differences rather than genuine differences in activity or cost.

- This could be addressed by the relevant enforcement bodies agreeing to a minimum data standard and cost taxonomy. At a minimum, records should enable us to distinguish high-level animal-welfare enforcement costs from other costs related to animal welfare. This would remove data gaps in recording such as those we identified in the FOI request responses. The standard should define which costs are direct, shared or fully allocated, rather than having to be collected retrospectively through FOI requests. A useful model for this might be the Australian Government Charging Framework, which is used to identify the costs of regulatory activity. Its cost model allocates expenditure to defined regulatory activities, enabling more accurate activity-based costing to understand the efficiency of regulatory procedures. The Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry uses this approach for live-animal regulation.⁵⁵ The framework could be owned and monitored jointly by Defra and the Scottish and Welsh governments. It would enable more accurate tracking of the direct downstream costs resulting from animal harm, as well as more accurate cost recovery where applicable.

2. Ensure the costs collected via the proposed cost-recording framework are centrally aggregated and analysed to support policy- and decision-making. At a more granular level, this data could also be used to identify hotspots and local trends in illegal animal harm, enabling more targeted and cost-effective enforcement. More robust recording would also improve understanding of which offences, against which animal victims, have the highest cost.

- Cost information is currently held separately by local authorities, police forces, public agencies, charities and criminal justice bodies. Even where organisations can provide detailed figures, as the FSA and FSS have done, there is no central mechanism for bringing these data together consistently or analysing expenditure across the full system.
- Fragmented data make it difficult to produce a complete estimate of cost spent on reaction and prevention, identify the activities driving costs, compare delivery models or assess whether resources are targeted effectively. This makes it difficult to understand whether approaches are working, problems are evolving, or whether resources to tackle harm to animals are being targeted effectively.
- This could be addressed by participating organisations submitting standardised data at agreed intervals. This mechanism is already present under Section 80 of the Animal Health Act 1981, where local authorities must submit annual returns on their animal health and welfare prosecutions. This could be extended to explicitly include the cost of enforcement. Such reporting would enable the identification of trends, explanation of the main cost drivers, and support resource allocation, policy appraisal, evaluation and operational improvement. This initiative could be headed by Defra and the Scottish government.

3. Improve the quality of recording of animal-related offences and ensure all animal-related crime is made notifiable in England and Wales, allowing for more accurate estimates of the scale and cost of animal harm.

- a. As discussed in the first report, aggregated data on animal-related offence volumes is not currently routinely published in England and Wales.⁵⁶ Moreover, since many animal-related crimes are non-notifiable offences, police forces do not have a duty to record them in the same systematic way as notifiable offences.
- b. The accuracy of police cost estimates is limited by inaccuracies in data on animal-welfare offence volumes.
- c. Ensuring all data on animal-related offences is centrally collated, routinely published and comparable to other serious offences would allow for a more accurate estimation of the associated costs, as well as tracking how they evolve over time in a comparable way. This would support policy-makers in making informed funding allocation decisions.

4. Recording prevention, routine inspection and enforcement costs separately would enable a more in-depth analysis of costs associated with animal harm, while helping measure the effectiveness of prevention interventions.

- a. Some available figures cover a wider set of activities than costs arising directly from harm or non-compliance. The report highlights this problem for costs borne by APHA, FSS assurance activity, nature agencies, local authority costs, charity expenditure, and some police agencies.
- b. Combining preventative, regulatory and enforcement expenditure can overstate the cost attributable to animal harm. However, excluding wider activity entirely can lead to an underestimation of the resources required to maintain the enforcement system.
- c. To address this, cost records would have to classify activity as prevention and licensing, routine monitoring and assurance, and reactive investigation and enforcement. The FSA already shares disaggregated cost data that map partially to these categories. To achieve data homogeneity, other welfare organisations should follow suit in publishing granular cost level data grouped by activity type.

5. The findings highlight that the current system does not adequately consider animals as victims of harm, and consequently fails to recognise the emotional and wellbeing 'costs' for animal victims. Formally recognising animals as victims would help minimise animal suffering through helping build the case for improvements in the way animals interact with the enforcement system, including faster signing over of animals for rehoming, and collecting financial compensation from perpetrators to help ensure future welfare.

- a. Currently, animals are often caught in legal limbo across the response process. They may be held by the police, local authorities or charities as property or evidence. Animal victims are also often euthanased.

- b. More consistent recognition of all animals as victims, guided by the Pet Abduction Act 2024, which acknowledges animals as more than property. Devising a method to account for the cost of animal suffering would help build the case for improvements in the system. This includes faster signing over of animals for rehoming, and collecting financial compensation from perpetrators to help ensure future welfare.
- c. To address this, the welfare and wellbeing of animals as victims should be treated as a central consideration in enforcement and justice system processes. The increased importance of animal wellbeing considerations should inform prosecutions and sentencing, whereby offenders are compelled to pay the long-term costs of the harm caused to animals (such as for treatment and rehoming).

6. Supplementary Green Book guidance should be developed for the appraisal of material animal-welfare impacts. This could be headed by HM Treasury and Defra, jointly with the Animal Sentience Committee.

- a. Although the current Green Book guidance explicitly asks practitioners to pay due regard to the welfare of domesticated and wild animals, the current approach does not offer more concrete guidance on approaches.⁵⁷
- b. Adding additional supplementary guidance, including the types of impacts that should be considered, would help ensure welfare of animals is being sufficiently considered in policy- and decision-making.
- c. To address this, HM Treasury and Defra could work with the Animal Sentience Committee to develop additional guidance for screening and quantification, including non-monetary approaches where no defensible method of monetisation could be devised.

7. The estimated scale of costs supports the Animal Sentience Committee's recommendation for establishing a central body responsible for directing and coordinating animal-welfare law monitoring and enforcement; this would work with the police, Defra, local government, other public bodies, and charities.⁵⁸

- a. The responsibility for monitoring and enforcement is currently fragmented across the police, NGOs, and various public bodies. Although some established bodies co-ordinate response for certain sub-sections of animals (as is the case with wild animals and the National Wildlife Crime Unit), no overarching body for co-ordinating animal welfare enforcement currently exists.
- b. Establishing a central body would help improve the consistency of enforcement, remove gaps in information sharing between stakeholders, and help prioritise the most critical animal welfare issues.
- c. As recommended by the Animal Sentience Committee, this need could be addressed by establishing a central body to co-ordinate animal welfare law monitoring and enforcement across agencies. Such an organisation would allow for greater consistency and accuracy in counting and costing animal cruelty in Great Britain.



7. Technical Annex

7.1 Methodology overview

The approach to estimating costs from offences against animals started by exploring where and how costs are borne across a range of groups, including costs to the animals, government, individuals and charities.

The existing available evidence was explored through a literature review, and areas where new evidence could be gathered through primary data collection (FOI requests and modelling) were considered. The 'case' for quantifying each of the costs was then assessed based on the following two steps:

1. Presentational considerations, including setting a credible boundary for the quantitative estimate and excluding costs that were too abstract. Costs excluded on this basis were instead identified in the narrative as additional, unquantified costs.
2. How credible/robust it would be to quantify the cost, based on the strength of evidence available (either from existing evidence or primary data collection).

These steps led to the development of Table A1, which supported data collection and outreach.

Based on this scoping, a methodology for estimating the identified cost was developed through adopting a multi-source approach, combining FOI requests with direct stakeholder engagement and publicly available data.⁵⁹ The details of our quantitative methods and stakeholder engagement can be found below on pages 50–51.

Reactive versus preventative costs

This report estimates the cost of responding to illegal offences that harm animals. Some organisations can isolate these reactive costs, but others report them alongside preventative expenditure and cannot apportion the two robustly. Although the analysis isolates reactive expenditure where possible, some estimates therefore contain an unknown preventative element. Costs are presented as either reactive or mixed reactive/preventative. Criminal justice system and local authority costs are classified as reactive; costs to other public agencies and charities are classified as mixed.

Table A1: Cost groups, types and feasibility

Group	Type of cost	Presentational reasons to include in quantification?	Evidence reasons to include in quantification?	Recommendation
Criminal justice system	Policing	Yes	Yes – while police forces were not able to supply direct costs for animal-related crimes due to lack of recording or the information being very resource-intensive to find and share, this cost was modelled based on offence volume data supplied by police forces	Quantify – through modelling
Criminal justice system (excluding the police)*	Courts & judicial system	Yes	Yes – this can be modelled based on publicly available data and evidence-based cost assumptions	Quantify – through modelling
	Prosecutions	Yes	Yes – this can be modelled based on publicly available data and evidence-based cost assumptions	Quantify – through modelling
	Legal aid	Yes	Yes – this can be modelled based on publicly available data and evidence-based cost assumptions	Quantify – through modelling
	Inspection and licensing costs	Yes	Yes – obtained through FOI requests, supplemented with modelling	Quantify and model – using FoI responses
	Prison/probation costs for offenders	Yes	Yes – modelled based on public data	Quantify – through modelling
	NHS costs e.g. from human injuries	No – costs may be considered too indirect	No – difficult to robustly apportion NHS costs specifically from animal harm	Flag narratively only.
Local government (excluding criminal justice system)	Animal warden wages	Yes	Yes – has been obtained through FOI requests	Quantify – using FoI responses and modelling to fill gaps
	Animal collection			
	Animal rehoming/euthanasia			
	Legal costs			
Individuals	Donations to animal charities	Yes	Yes – based on charities’ cost data	Quantify – using charity cost data
	Vet bills (in excess of average from negative impacts on animals)	No – costs may be considered too indirect	No – difficult to robustly estimate excess vet bills	Flag narratively only
	Pet insurance premiums (in excess of average from negative impacts on animals)	No – costs may be considered too indirect	No – difficult to robustly estimate excess premiums	Flag narratively only
	Impact on human wellbeing from harm to animals	No – costs may be considered too indirect/intangible and likely to substantially inflate the total	No – difficult to robustly estimate impact on human wellbeing	Flag narratively only
Charities	Expenditure on all activities resulting from animal harm**	Yes	Yes – based on charities’ cost data	Quantify – using charity cost data**
Animals	Pain and suffering.	Yes	No – no precedent for valuing in £s the impact on animals	Flag narratively only

* Costs for Border Force and the ASRU were excluded because available expenditure data could not be robustly attributed to illegal animal harm: Border Force does not report costs by specific activity and recovers some costs, while ASRU expenditure covers its wider regulatory and licensing functions and does not separately identify costs arising from non-compliance.

** This overlaps with the donations to charities borne by individuals.



7.2.2 Analysis of costs to police forces

The analysis of costs to police forces relies on volume estimates from the previous scale report. The volume estimates were then analysed against police response costs to generate the total cost of police response to animal-related crime.

Details of FOI request estimating the volume of crimes against animals in England and Wales

FOI request wording:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, we would be grateful if you could provide the following information:

1. *The count of offences of "animal-related" crime you recorded on your system in 2025/26. Please see below for our exact definition of "animal-related" crime.*
 2. *Total count of offences of "animal-related" crime you recorded on your system in 2025/26, by offence code.*
 3. *Total count of offences of "animal-related" crime you recorded in 2025/26, by outcome.*
 4. *Total number of incidents recorded as "Animals/wildlife" in 2025/26.*
 5. *The total number of calls with a call type 'animal', 'wildlife' or 'animal/wildlife' within STORM (if STORM is used) in 2025/26.*
 6. *Any known reason for why recorded reports might be lower than true volume of incidents. Please provide this data for the 2025/26 financial year (date range 01/04/2025 – 31/03/2026).*
- For the purposes of this request, we define "animal-related crime" as any incident which is logged against any of the following pieces of legislation:*

Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963, Animal Health Act 1981, Animal Welfare Act 2006, Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, Deer Act 1991 Sec 1, 2, 3, Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953, Game Act 1831 Sec 30, Hunting Act 2004 Sec 1, 3(1), 5, Night Poaching Act 1828 Sec 1, Pet Abduction Act 2024 Sec 1 and 2, Poaching Prevention Act 1862 Sec 2, Protection of Badgers Act 1992, Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975, Sea Fishing (Enforcement of Community Quota Measures), Order 1988 Sea Fishing (Prohibition on Removal of Shark Fins) Order 2007 Sec 4,5,12, Sexual Offences Act 2003 Sec 69(1)(3) and Sec 69(2)(3), The Control of Dogs Order 1992, Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations 2007, Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Responses containing data were received from:

1. Bedfordshire Police
2. Cambridgeshire Police
3. Cheshire Constabulary
4. Derbyshire Police
5. Greater Manchester Police

7.2 Quantitative methodology

7.2.1 Overview of the approach

FOI requests were submitted to local government, central government departments, other public bodies and police forces to access non-public cost data including staff costs, expenditure on contracted services, and enforcement costs. In total, FOI requests were submitted to 261 organisations:

Through the FOI process, the following public bodies were contacted:

- All 207 local authorities in Great Britain
- All 44 police forces across Great Britain
- Food Standards Agency
- Food Standards Scotland
- Animal and Plant Health Agency
- Defra
- Ministry of Justice
- Home Office
- Border Force through the Home Office
- Crown Prosecution Service
- Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
- National Police Chiefs' Council

Data collected via FOI requests comprised the majority of cost data. Publicly available data sources supplemented these stakeholders' costs, and provided the majority of the cost data for charities and organisations.

Three agencies – Natural England, NatureScot and Natural Resources Wales – were also contacted outside of the FOI process and shared useful information, including context, publicly available accounts, and additional accounting information.

6. Humberside Police
7. Kent Police
8. North Wales Police
9. Northamptonshire Police
10. Northumbria Police
11. Nottinghamshire Police
12. Police Scotland (incident only, as Police Scotland publishes offence data)
13. Surrey Police
14. Sussex Police
15. West Mercia Police
16. West Yorkshire Police
17. Wiltshire Police
18. Gwent Police.

FOI responses were received in Excel, Word and PDF formats, then cleaned and consolidated in Excel. Each force’s response was reviewed separately to prevent duplication and ensure that the correct data were included. Gwent Police, Surrey Police and Sussex Police were excluded from the cost analysis because they omitted some requested offence codes or supplied arrest rather than recorded offence data.

Incident, offence and outcome data was analysed using statistical software R using the ‘tidyverse’ and ‘readxl’ packages. The data was cleaned up into common categories based on outcomes, and summarised.

Notably, the FOI responses returned a relatively small number of fishing and marine wildlife offences. This is likely due to commercial sea-fishing offences being handled by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) or regional Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs), from inspection all the way through investigation and prosecution, bypassing the police.⁶⁰ Those organisations operate as independent statutory regulators and possess their own direct legal powers to investigate, issue administrative penalties, caution, or prosecute breaches.⁶¹

Because of this, the total number of fishing and marine wildlife prosecutions was used to proxy for fishing and marine wildlife offences. While a criminal prosecution in England and Wales does not strictly have to be a pre-recorded offence, the underlying conduct must be established as an offence in law during the proceedings. Therefore, prosecution statistics in this case are a better reflection of the underlying incidence of offences than data recorded by the police.

For other crime categories, the mean response was assumed to represent all police forces in England and Wales. Responding forces had a mean population of 1.36 million and recorded

a mean of 112,600 crimes in the latest annual data, compared with 1.48 million and 122,000 among non-respondents. Complete responses also covered all English regions and Wales: three forces were from the East Midlands; two each from the East of England, North West, and Yorkshire and the Humber; and one each from the North East, South East, South West, West Midlands and Wales. These comparisons indicate that the responding forces formed a broadly representative sample.

Analysis of Police Scotland crime data, 2024/25

Police Scotland published detected and recorded crime. Offences were filtered for the descriptions detailed below in Table A2, and summed to generate the total number of offences.

Table A2: Offence codes used in Police Scotland crime data analysis

Offence name	Category
Offences involving animals, excluding dogs, or birds elsewhere classified	Animal welfare
Birds, offences involving	Wild animal offences
Cruelty to animals ex dogs incl. killing and maiming cattle	Animal welfare
Cruelty to dogs	Animal welfare
Cruelty to wild animals	Wild animal offences
Deer – Statutory – offences	Wild animal offences
Dogs bred for fighting	Dangerous dogs offences
Dogs, other offences	Animal welfare
Hunting with dogs	Wild animal offences
Keeping dogs under prop ctrl., contrav. of an order	Dangerous dogs offences
Offences involving badgers	Wild animal offences
Other conservation offences	Other wildlife offences
Other wildlife offences	Other wildlife offences
Pet and kept animals	Animal welfare
Possession of salmon or trout as result of offence	Fishing and marine wildlife offences
Possession of salmon or trout unlawfully obtained	Fishing and marine wildlife offences
Protection of livestock from dogs	Worrying livestock
Salmon and freshwater fisheries offences	Fishing and marine wildlife offences
Sea fisheries offences	Fishing and marine wildlife offences

Estimating costs to police forces and adjacent agencies

Desk-based research identified the Police Activity Survey, which gives crime response workforce costs by crime type on police recorded crime (PRC) basis. Although the costings are not granular enough to enable isolating animal crime specifically, they do give banded unit costs for dealing with Miscellaneous crimes, Public order offences and Other sexual offences, which can be uprated to the current year and mapped to animal crime data (broadly £280 to £4,440 per incident in 2025/26 prices) to give the overall cost for police force response costs. The details of those costs uprated to 2025/26 prices can be seen below in Table A3.

Table A3: Crime incident type by response cost for the relevant crime incident types

Crime incident type	Crime response workforce unit cost (2022 to 2023, on police recorded crime basis, 2026 prices)	Lower quartile (2025/26 prices)	Upper quartile (2025/26 prices)
Other sexual offences	£3,456.04	£2,810.16	£4,441.87
Miscellaneous crimes	£1,722.36	£1,235.11	£2,118.95
Violence with injury	£1,416.41	£1,223.78	£1,756.35
Violence without injury	£532.57	£464.58	£645.88
Other theft offences	£362.60	£249.29	£475.91
Public order offences	£317.28	£283.28	£385.26

Source: WPI Economics analysis, Police Activity Survey

These costs were mapped to offence volumes generated in the previous analysis. Most animal-related crimes were judged to correspond most closely to ‘Miscellaneous crimes’. However, where possible, certain crimes were mapped to other categories. Bestiality was mapped to ‘Other sexual offences’; dangerous dogs offences were mapped either to ‘Violence with injury’ or Violence without injury’, depending on whether or not injury was recorded. Pet abduction was classified as ‘Other theft offences’.

The additional costs of fishing and marine wildlife offences in England and Wales are estimated separately as those may be handled by the MMO or the Environment Agency (EA). The total number of fishing and marine wildlife prosecutions was taken as a conservative proxy for the total number of those offences. In the absence of cost data, MMO and the EA’s costs of dealing with offences are treated as similar to the police unit cost.

In addition to costs to individual police forces, information supplied by the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) was considered, including the budget of the National Wildlife Crime Unit and the portion of the National Rural Crime Network budget attributable to animal

welfare. These represent additional expenses borne by the Home Office and Defra to facilitate animal-crime policing. The findings of a report on kennelling and veterinary costs, supplied by the NPCC in response to an FOI request, were also used. The exact methodology and notes on data robustness are detailed in Table A4.

Table A4: Overall cost to police and adjacent agencies

Geography	Cost type	Cost estimate	Methodology and data robustness
England and Wales	Police costs of responding to recorded offences, 2025/26 (2026 prices)	£47,590,000 – £70,190,000	This estimate is based on the estimated volume of crimes obtained through FOI responses received from 14 police forces (33%) across England and Wales and the Police Activity Survey crime response costs. This estimate is based on relatively robust volume data and an established cost methodology. However, it is worth noting that some animal-related offences may not be recorded (see Section 3.3 on data limitations).
Scotland	Police costs of responding to recorded offences, 2025/26 (2026 prices)	£2,000,000 – £3,430,000	This estimate is based on the estimated volume of crimes recorded by Police Scotland and the Police Activity Survey crime response costs. This estimate is based on relatively robust volume data and an established cost methodology. However, it applies policing costs in England and Wales to Scotland due to a lack of comparable data for Scotland.
England and Wales	Additional cost of responding to fishing offences borne by other organisations, 2025 (2026 prices)	£640,000 – £1,100,000	This estimate is based on an estimated number of offences ⁶² and the Police Activity Survey crime response costs. This estimate is based on a very conservative assumption of the volume of fishing offences based on recorded prosecutions, and might therefore be an underestimate of the true cost. Moreover, it assumes that Police Activity Survey crime response costs are representative of crime response costs borne by other organisations.
Great Britain	National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) budget funded by several UK government agencies as well as NPCC, 2026/27	£880,000	This figure is directly supplied by the NPCC, assuming 95% of the UK budget can be attributed to Great Britain operations. This estimate is very robust. However, it is worth noting the NWCU undertakes limited preventative activity (e.g. officer training) so, unlike other costs in this table, this estimate may include a preventative element.
Great Britain	National Rural Crime Network (NRCN) livestock coordinator role inc. salary, hire vehicle, fuel, etc. ⁶³ funded by NFU Mutual, 2025/26 (2026 prices)	£50,000	Based on an FOI response received from the NPCC, assuming 95% of the UK budget can be attributed to Great Britain operations. 2026 prices. This estimate is very robust. However, it is worth noting the NRCN undertakes limited preventative activity (e.g. officer training), so unlike other costs in this table, this estimate may include a preventative element.

Table A4: Overall cost to police and adjacent agencies (continued)

Geography	Cost type	Cost estimate	Methodology and data robustness
Great Britain	Cost of kennelling and veterinary bills associated with the enforcement of the Dangerous Dogs Act, 2024/25 (2026 prices)	£19,400,000 ⁶⁴ – £32,330,000 ⁶⁵	Using a report supplied in an FOI response received from the NPCC which projected costs of kennelling and veterinary bills. This estimate relies on a cost projection, meaning there is a relatively high level of uncertainty reflected in the wide bands of the estimate. There is also some risk this estimate might partly overlap with the cost of responding to crime reported above. ⁶⁶
Great Britain	TOTAL (assuming no overlap)	£70,600,000 – £108,000,000	

7.2.3 Analysis of costs to the criminal justice system (excluding the police)

Analysis of Ministry of Justice sentencing and prosecutions – England and Wales

Prosecutions, convictions and sentencing data was produced using the latest available Ministry of Justice (MoJ) data for 2023–2025. The data was filtered for animal-related offence codes selected on the basis of desk-based research and additional manual review of all Home Office offence codes. Counts were summed across prosecutions and convictions for the relevant years. The exact list of offence codes used to produce the analysis is detailed in Table A5.

Table A5: Offence codes used in prosecutions analysis

Home Office offence code and description	Category
09705 – Offences relating to animal fights	Animal fights
10833 – Offences relating to animal fights (Reclassified)	Animal fights
10804 – Offences under Performing Animals (Regulation) Act 1925, e.g. exhibition and training of performing animals without being registered	Animal licensing
10809 – Offences under Pet Animals Act 1951, e.g. Licensing of pet shops	Animal licensing
10818 – Offences under Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963, e.g. licensing and inspection of boarding establishment to ensure welfare of animals	Animal licensing
10819 – Offences under Riding Establishments Acts 1964 and 1970, e.g. animal cruelty, prohibited sports and pastimes, irregularities in horse slaughtering, etc.	Animal licensing
10836 – Carrying on activity without authority of S.13 licence or carrying on unregistered S.13 activity concerning Animal Welfare Act 2006	Animal licensing

Table A5: Offence codes used in prosecutions analysis (continued)

Home Office offence code and description	Category
11107 – Offences in relation to dogs under Breeding of Dogs Act 1973, e.g. licensing of breeding establishments for dogs	Animal licensing
09701 – Causing, permitting or failing to prevent unnecessary suffering of a protected animal	Animal welfare
09702 – Carrying out, permitting, causing to be carried out or failing to prevent prohibited procedure on a protected animal	Animal welfare
09703 – Removing or causing or permitting or failing to prevent removal of a dog’s tail other than for medical treatment	Animal welfare
09704 – Administration of poisons, etc. to a protected animal	Animal welfare
10802 – Offences under Protection of Animals Act 1911, e.g. cruelty to animals	Animal welfare
10814 – Offences under Abandonment of Animals Act 1960	Animal welfare
10829 – Causing, permitting or failing to prevent unnecessary suffering (Reclassified)	Animal welfare
10830 – Carrying out, permitting, causing to be carried out or failing to prevent prohibited procedure on a protected animal (Reclassified)	Animal welfare
10831 – Removing or causing or permitting or failing to prevent removal of a dog’s tail other than for medical treatment (Reclassified)	Animal welfare
10832 – Administration of poisons, etc. to a protected animal (Reclassified)	Animal welfare
10834 – Failing to ensure needs of an animal are met, as required by good practice	Animal welfare
10837 – Breach of a disqualification imposed after conviction of specified offences concerning Animal Welfare Act 2006	Animal welfare
10839 – Intentionally obstructing a person exercising power conferred by this section relating to an animal in distress	Animal welfare
10840 – Transported an animal in transporter not fit for intended journey	Animal welfare
10843 – Offences under Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations 2007	Animal welfare
11001 – Summary offences under Animal Health Act 1981 (except cases of cruelty under SS.8, 9, 10(1), 13, 37–43 or offences relating to dogs under S.13)	Animal welfare

Table A5: Offence codes used in prosecutions analysis (continued)

Home Office offence code and description	Category
09903 – Offences relating to the purchase and sale of specimens (Control of Trade in Endangered Species [Enforcement] Regulations 1997)	CITES offences
09917 – Triable either way offences under the Control of Trade in Endangered Species Regulations 2018, para 1	CITES offences
09918 – Triable either way offences under the Control of Trade in Endangered Species Regulations 2018, para 2	CITES offences
00821 – Owner or person in charge allowing a dog to be dangerously out of control in any place in England and Wales (whether or not in a public place), injuring any person or assistance dog	Dangerous dogs offences
00822 – Owner or person in charge allowing a dog to enter a non-public place and injure any person	Dangerous dogs offences
11101 – Offences in relation to dogs under Town Police Clauses Act 1847	Dangerous dogs offences
11102 – Offences relating to keeping of dangerous dogs	Dangerous dogs offences
11104 – Owner or person in charge causing or permitting a dog to be in a public place without a collar	Dangerous dogs offences
11106 – Cause or permit dog to be on a designated road when not held on leash	Dangerous dogs offences
11112 – Breeding or breeding from a fighting dog	Dangerous dogs offences
11113 – Selling, exchanging, offering, advertising or exposing for sale a fighting dog	Dangerous dogs offences
11114 – Giving or offering to give a fighting dog or dangerous dog	Dangerous dogs offences
11115 – Allowing a fighting dog to be in a public place without a muzzle or a lead	Dangerous dogs offences
11116 – Abandoning, or allowing to stray, a fighting dog	Dangerous dogs offences
11117 – Possess/have custody of a fighting dog	Dangerous dogs offences
11118 – Owner or person in charge allowing dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place, without injury being caused	Dangerous dogs offences
11120 – Offences in relation to dogs under Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and Protection of Badgers Act 1992, e.g. failing to give up a dog for destruction or having custody of a dog while disqualified or having a dog present in the killing/injury/taking of a badger	Dangerous dogs offences
11125 – Owner or person in charge of a dog dangerously out of control – no injury	Dangerous dogs offences

Table A5: Offence codes used in prosecutions analysis (continued)

Home Office offence code and description	Category
11127 – Offences relating to failure to deliver a dog up to enable order for the dog to be taken into possession to be carried out	Dangerous dogs offences
09888 – Triable either way offences under Sea Fisheries Act 1968	Fishing and marine wildlife offences
09889 – Offences of damaging, etc. protected features of Marine Conservation Zones (Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009)	Fishing and marine wildlife offences
09891 – Contravening the law relating to the regulation and control of fishing and the protection and conservation of fisheries for salmon, trout, freshwater fish and eels, and the times of fishing for the selling of such fish b. Sec 27 (instrument other than rod and line) Secs 4 and 5 (Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975)	Fishing and marine wildlife offences
09892 – Fishing with, or possessing, fishing prohibited instruments	Fishing and marine wildlife offences
09895 – Fish/take fish by other than licensable means in circumstances where fishing/taking may or may not be authorised, or possess unlicensed instrument with intent to fish/take fish or without a S27A authority	Fishing and marine wildlife offences
09922 – Triable either way offences under Sea Fishing (Enforcement of Community Control Measures) Order Act 2000	Fishing and marine wildlife offences
11601 – Offences against Sea Fisheries Acts 1851 to 1968	Fishing and marine wildlife offences
11602 – Offences against Sea Fisheries Regulation Acts 1891 to 1966	Fishing and marine wildlife offences
11606 – Summary offences against Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975	Fishing and marine wildlife offences
11607 – Fishing salmon or freshwater fish in breach of The Scotland Act 1998 (River Tweed) Order 2006	Fishing and marine wildlife offences
11611 – Attempt to unlawfully take or destroy fish in private fishery, etc. (Theft Act 1968)	Fishing and marine wildlife offences
11612 – Offences against Diseases of Fish Act 1937 and Orders thereunder and Diseases of Fish Act 1980	Fishing and marine wildlife offences
19698 – Summary offences under Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009	Fishing and marine wildlife offences
19701 – Summary offences under Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017	Fishing and marine wildlife offences
11105 – Owner or person in charge of dog worrying livestock on agricultural land	Livestock worrying

Table A5: Offence codes used in prosecutions analysis (continued)

Home Office offence code and description	Category
09171 – Triable either way offences under Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2005 and 2011	Other offences which may involve animal harm
09814 – Triable either way offences under Products of Animal Origins (Third Country Imports) (England) Regulations 2006, and Animal and Animal Products (Import and Export) Regulations 2004	Other offences which may involve animal harm
09919 – Triable either way offences under Trade in Animals and Related Products Regulations 2011	Other offences which may involve animal harm
09902 – Intentionally or recklessly removing or causing or permitting the removal of a hedgerow	Other wildlife offences
09920 – Offences relating to the introduction of new species	Other wildlife offences
09948 – Areas of special scientific interest (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981)	Other wildlife offences
04903 – Abduction of pet dog/cat	Pet abduction
08614 – Possession of extreme pornographic images, e.g. a person performing an act of intercourse or oral sex with an animal (whether dead or alive) (bestiality)	Sexual offences involving animals
08803 – Intercourse with an animal (male offender)	Sexual offences involving animals
08804 – Intercourse with an animal (female offender)	Sexual offences involving animals
10822 – Offences under Protection of Badgers Act 1992	Wild animal offences
10823 – Offences under Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, e.g. certain wild animals (schedule 5) may not be killed, injured or taken by any method	Wild animal offences
10824 – Offences under Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, e.g. certain wild animals (schedule 6) may not be killed or taken by certain methods	Wild animal offences
10825 – Offences under Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996	Wild animal offences
11801 – Taking or destroying game or rabbits on lands, etc., by night, or entering lands at night to take or destroy game	Wild animal offences
11804 – Enter land as a trespasser at night to poach armed with a weapon	Wild animal offences
11901 – Trespassing in the daytime in search of game, etc., and other offences in connection therewith (Game Act 1831)	Wild animal offences
12001 – Coming from land in possession of game that has been unlawfully obtained, or with gun or net	Wild animal offences

Table A5: Offence codes used in prosecutions analysis (continued)

Home Office offence code and description	Category
12111 – Summary offences under the Deer Act 1991, e.g. taking, injuring or killing deer	Wild animal offences
12113 – Hunting a wild mammal with a dog	Wild animal offences
12114 – Knowingly permitting land to be entered or used in the course of hunting a wild mammal with dogs	Wild animal offences
12115 – Knowingly permitting a dog to be used in the course of hunting a wild mammal	Wild animal offences
12116 – Participating in a hare coursing event	Wild animal offences
12117 – Attending a hare coursing event	Wild animal offences
12120 – Permitting, etc. a dog to participate in a hare coursing event	Wild animal offences
12121 – Offences relating to trespassing with intent to pursue hares with dogs	Wild animal offences
19001 – Summary offences in relation to birds under Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	Wild animal offences
19002 – Summary offences in relation to nests and eggs of birds under Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	Wild animal offences
19006 – Prohibition of certain methods of killing or taking wild birds under Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	Wild animal offences
19007 – Offences under Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	Wild animal offences
19009 – Offences under Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Section 7)	Wild animal offences

Estimating costs to the criminal justice system (excluding the police)

The 2026 update of the Home Office’s Economic and social costs of crime 2019 to 2020 report was used to identify the key components of costs in this category:⁶⁷

- Crown Prosecution Service (or COPFS in Scotland)
- Magistrates’ courts and the Crown Court (or Justice of the Peace Courts, Sheriff Courts, and High Court of Justiciary in Scotland)
- Jury service
- Legal aid defence
- Non-legal aid defence
- Prison Service
- Probation Service
- Youth Justice Services

Table A6: Annual costs to the criminal justice system (excluding the police) based on 3,900 prosecutions reported in 2025 with full methodology

Cost area	Estimated annual cost	Methodology and data robustness
Magistrates' courts and the Crown Court (including jury service) – England and Wales, 2025 (2025/26 prices)	£2,460,000 – £3,000,000	These estimates are based on Ministry of Justice (MoJ) court proceedings and cost data, assuming animal-related prosecutions are similar to the average prosecution.
Legal aid – England and Wales, 2025 (2025/26 prices)	£2,820,000 – £3,450,000	These estimates are based on MoJ court proceedings and cost data, assuming animal-related prosecutions are similar to the average prosecution.
Prison – England and Wales, 2025 (2025/26 prices)	£1,540,000 – £1,880,000	These estimates are based on MoJ court sentencing data, combined with an estimate of average costs of housing prisoners.
Probation – England and Wales, 2025 (2025/26 prices)	£3,310,000 – £4,040,000	These estimates are based on MoJ court sentencing data, combined with an estimate of the average costs of probation and community service.
Youth Justice Services – England and Wales, 2025/26 (2025/26 prices)	£260,000 – £510,000	These estimates are based on MoJ court proceedings data, combined with an estimate of average costs to Youth Justice Services from the Economic and Social Costs of Crime report.
CPS – England and Wales, 2025 (2025/26 prices)	£2,920,000 – £4,860,000	These estimates are based on MoJ court proceedings data, combined with an estimate of CPS costs by proceeding. These estimates assume animal-related prosecutions are similar to the average prosecution.
Courts, legal aid, prison and probation, Youth Justice Services – Scotland, 2025 (2025/26 prices)	£560,000 – £700,000	These estimates assume costs to Scottish courts are similar to costs to courts in England and Wales, and extrapolate English and Welsh cost estimates to Scotland weighted by the total number of prosecutions identified.
COPFS – Scotland*, 2025/26 (2025/26 prices)	£800,000 – £1,060,000	These estimates combine direct costs of the WILD sub-function, which have been provided directly by COPFS via an FOI response with an estimate of the cost of companion animal-related proceedings, assuming an average cost to COPFS by proceeding.
Great Britain TOTAL	£14,700,000 – £19,500,000	

* Please note that the large differences between COPFS and CPS costs can be explained by differences in their roles. While the CPS is primarily a prosecuting authority that does not investigate crimes,⁶⁸ COPFS is likely to play a more direct role in investigations for some offences.⁶⁹ Moreover, while the RSPCA prosecutes the majority of cases under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA) does not prosecute and instead refers cases to COPFS, meaning the higher volume of prosecutions in England and Wales does not directly translate into a higher relative workload for CPS. It is also worth noting that these estimates use different underlying methodologies, with COPFS estimates relying on data that was supplied by COPFS directly. CPS was not able to provide equivalent estimates upon request, and the cost figure relies on assumptions informed by desk research.

Total costs in England and Wales

Crown Prosecution Service

The CPS’s 2025/26 budget of £946 million and its 486,590 completed prosecutions imply an average cost of £1,944 per completed prosecution, including staff, prosecution and overhead costs. This is lower than the estimated COPFS cost of £2,900 per case ending in a court disposal and the £8,710 cost per wildlife case calculated from information supplied by COPFS, detailed below.

The large difference between COPFS and CPS costs may be partly explained by differences in their roles. While the CPS is primarily a prosecuting authority that does not investigate crimes,⁷⁰ COPFS plays a more direct role in investigations.⁷¹ COPFS also operates a dedicated Wildlife and Environmental Crime Unit that investigates and manages all prosecution cases related to wildlife crime.⁷² Moreover, while the RSPCA prosecutes the majority of cases under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, the SSPCA does not prosecute and instead refers cases to COPFS, meaning the higher volume of prosecutions in England and Wales does not directly translate into a higher relative workload for CPS. It is also worth noting that these estimates

use different underlying methodologies, with COPFS estimates relying on data that was supplied by COPFS directly. CPS was not able to provide equivalent estimates upon request, and the cost figure relies on assumptions informed by desk research.

Approximately 3,700 animal-related prosecutions took place in 2025 according to Ministry of Justice data. Of the 3,700 identified, there is significant uncertainty regarding the proportion of animal-related prosecutions that included the CPS, as other organisations may prosecute for animal welfare-related offences. For example, in the same time period, the RSPCA secured 1,144 convictions through its Prosecutions Department. Due to this uncertainty, a relatively wide range of a plausible CPS caseload is assumed of between 1,500 and 2,500 prosecutions, meaning that, using the £1,944 unit cost, the costs might lie in the range of £2.92 million and £4.86 million annually.

Magistrates’ courts and the Crown Court

Proceedings and sentence outcomes from Magistrates’ courts and the Crown Court, by offence, are available publicly.⁷³ Public statistics also allow us to estimate the costs of the Magistrates’ courts and the Crown Court per case disposed (approximately £300 and

£3,700 per case, respectively, with Crown Court cases more expensive on average). The data allow us to estimate the approximate total cost of animal crime cases to HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS). In 2025, approximately 3,700 animal-related prosecutions in Magistrates’ courts cost HMCTS approximately £1.14 million (in 2026 prices). In 2025, the Crown Court handled approximately 430 animal-related cases, including 280 cases appearing at the Crown Court for trial and 160 cases appearing at the Crown Court for sentencing. It is estimated to cost HMCTS approximately £1.59 million (in 2026 prices). Bands of 90% to 110% of the central figure are assumed in order to reflect the uncertainty of those estimates, so that the total cost of proceedings in Magistrates’ courts and the Crown Court is estimated to be between £2.46 million and £3 million.

Jury service

Total costs of jury service to the courts are captured in Magistrates’ courts and the Crown Court, detailed above, as they form part of the operating budget. This means the Crown Court total cost estimate includes jury service costs.

Legal aid

Legal aid workload and expenditure for January to March 2025 equated to 73,908 Magistrates’ court representation cases costing £33.9 million (on average, £460 per case) and 45,908 Crown Court cases costing £179.4 million (on average, £3,900 per case). These figures were uprated to the current price year. The annualised legal aid budget for Magistrates’ courts and the Crown Court is assumed to be proportionally distributed across cases. In Magistrates’ courts, animal-related prosecutions represented 0.26% of all cases. In the Crown Court, animal-related prosecutions represented 0.37% of all cases. These proportions are multiplied by the overall annual legal aid budget for each respective court. Using this method, legal aid for animal-related cases in Magistrates’ courts is estimated to have cost approximately £0.36 million in 2025 (in 2026 prices). Legal aid for animal-related cases in the Crown Court is estimated to have cost approximately £2.78 million in 2025 (in 2026 prices). Bands of 90% to 110% of the central figure are assumed to reflect the uncertainty of those estimates, so that the total cost of legal aid in the Magistrates’ courts and Crown Court is estimated to be between £2.82 million and £3.45 million.

Prison Service

Details of convictions for animal crimes are available publicly, including sentence length, probation details, and average fines.⁷⁴ For individuals sentenced to direct custody, the average length of custodial sentence (in years) is multiplied by the average cost per prisoner per year based on the latest available Ministry of Justice statistics on prison performance uprated to 2026 prices (£58,569). This analysis estimates that the cost of housing prisoners who have committed animal-related crimes averages approximately £1.71 million annually. Bands of 90% to 110% of the central figure are assumed to reflect the uncertainty of those estimates: £1.54 million to £1.88 million.

Probation Service

The average cost to the Probation Service in 2023/24 of an additional person on the probation licence caseload (including probation pre-release costs) was estimated at around £4,500 compared with around £3,150 for an additional person on the probation court order caseload (community orders and suspended sentence orders).⁷⁵ Those average values were uprated to 2026 and assumed to apply to community and suspended sentence orders outcomes in the Ministry of Justice sentencing outcomes data. This analysis estimates the cost of community and suspended sentences for animal-related crimes in total at approximately £3.67 million. Bands of 90% to 110% of the central figure are assumed to reflect uncertainty of those estimates: £3.31 million to £4.04 million.

Youth Justice Services

The average Youth Justice Services cost for different types of crime is taken from the Economic and Social Costs of Crime report and uprated to the current year. Outside of Homicide and Violence with injury cases, the average cost of this per case lies in the range of <£5–£10 per case.⁷⁶ Given the estimated 40,000 animal-related offences that take place annually in England and Wales, this would put the expected costs of Youth Justice Services (uprated to the current price year) at between £260,000 and £510,000 annually.

Total costs in England and Wales

Summing all costs outlined in this section gives a total of £13.3 million to £17.75 million borne by HMCTS as a result of animal-related offences. The estimates are summarised in Table A7.

Table A7: Cost tabulation for criminal justice system (excluding the police) in England and Wales

Cost category	Lower bound	Upper bound
CPS costs	£2,920,000	£4,860,000
Cost of court proceedings in Magistrates’ courts, 2025, 2025/26 prices	£1,030,000	£1,260,000
Cost of court proceedings in Crown Court, 2025, 2025/26 prices	£1,430,000	£1,750,000
Cost of legal aid in Magistrates’ courts, 2025, 2025/26 prices	£320,000	£400,000
Cost of legal aid in Crown Court, 2025, 2025/26 prices	£2,500,000	£3,060,000
Cost of housing prisoners, 2025 in 2025/26 prices	£1,540,000	£1,880,000
Cost of community and suspended sentence orders, 2025 in 2025/26 prices	£3,310,000	£4,040,000
Youth Justice Services costs	£260,000	£510,000
England and Wales TOTAL	£13,300,000	£17,750,000

Total costs in Scotland

There is a lack of equivalent data and analysis that covers Scotland. No regular prosecutions and sentencing outcomes data are published. COPFS activity is also not routinely published beyond aggregated budgets and caseloads. The most granular data on prosecution activity is provided in the Scotland Wildlife Report, but this data source only covers wild animals and the minority of prosecution cases. As such, a top-down approach is used to estimate the majority of Scottish costs: using the estimated prosecution numbers from the scale report (~200) to proportionately scale the England and Wales total costs in order to generate Great Britain-wide estimates.

To estimate court costs, costs in Scotland are assumed to be approximately 5.5% of overall costs in England and Wales (of all functions excluding the CPS costs), which is approximately £560,000 to £700,000.

Via an FOI request, COPFS has confirmed that the budget allocated to the WILD sub-function for 2025/26 was £528,612. In 2023/24, the COPFS WILD sub-function had a budget of £627,190 against 72 wildlife crime cases,⁷⁷ giving an average cost of £8,710 per case.

By comparing COPFS’ overall budget against total cases received, and cases which end in a court disposal, an estimate of ‘cost per case received’ equal to £1,501 and ‘cost per case which ended in a court disposal’ equal to £2,945 were calculated. Those estimates, combined with an assumed number of prosecutions referred from the SSPCA, were used to calculate a lower and upper bound cost associated with the estimated 180 cases referred by the SSPCA, giving a total of £800,000 to £1.06 million.

Overall, this gives a total cost of approximately £1.36 million to £1.76 million, as shown further in Table A8.

Table A8: Cost tabulation for criminal justice system (excluding the police) in Scotland

Cost category	Lower bound	Upper bound
Estimated total costs of legal process in Scotland (exc. COPFS)	£560,000	£700,000
COPFS	£800,000	£1,060,000
Scotland TOTAL	£1,360,000	£1,760,000

Together, the estimates for England, Wales and Scotland give a total for Great Britain, which is shown in Table A9.

Table A9: Cost tabulation for combined criminal justice system (excluding the police) in Scotland, England and Wales

Cost category	Lower bound	Upper bound
England and Wales total	£13,300,000	£17,750,000
Scotland total	£1,360,000	£1,760,000
Great Britain TOTAL	£14,660,000	£19,500,000

7.2.4 Analysis of costs to the local government (excluding the criminal justice system)

An FOI request was delivered to local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, focusing in particular on county and unitary authorities where relevant. This FOI request asked local authorities for information regarding expenditure on animal welfare through contracted services, legal activities, staff, and any other associated costs and activities not otherwise covered. The complete FOI ask requested any information the local authority held regarding the following for the 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years, and was as follows:

- The total expenditure on any contracted service related to animal welfare (e.g. kennelling, veterinary care, or rehoming) incurred because of any animal welfare enforcement activity.
- Total legal costs associated with animal welfare prosecutions broken down by court fees, counsel/legal representation and prosecution-related legal expenses.
- Any other staff time and associated costs attributable to animal welfare enforcement activities. This may include, but is not limited to, inspections, case management, and liaising with other organisations such as RSPCA and the police.
- Any other costs associated with animal welfare enforcement activity not already included under staffing costs, legal costs or contracted services. This may include any other operational, administrative or incidental costs related to enforcement activity involving farmed, wild and companion animals.

Local authorities were chased to provide information if they failed to respond within the statutorily required 20 working days. It is important to note that the costs listed above were designed to be primarily exemplary, with local authorities encouraged to report any costs they believed were incurred as a result of animal welfare enforcement activity. Cost data reported by some local authorities also included costs from activities not listed here, such as those attributed to inspections conducted under licensing activities.

Around 68% of the local authorities contacted provided some data regarding the cost of their activities relating to animal welfare, though upon further assessment it was determined that only 58% of local authorities had provided data that could be used in the analysis. The raw, reported cost to local authorities for animal welfare-related activities across 2023/24 to 2025/26 comes out as £22.2 million. This figure includes the costs reported for all three years: 2023/24; 2024/25; and 2025/26. As an average yearly cost, this is £7.38 million.

In order to extrapolate this partial dataset into a complete estimate for the cost of delivering animal welfare services to local authorities in Great Britain, a number of different approaches were considered. There are a number of factors that could plausibly determine the extent of animal welfare spend in a given local authority, including region, population, the amount of rural land, and levels of crime. To determine if any of these factors could be used to predict the amount spent on animal harm in a given local authority, a linear model was deployed to test for any statistically significant relationships between local authority spend and the

factors listed above. That analysis showed no clear relationships, likely due to sample size and measurement issues rather than a real finding of no link. As a result, the more simple and general approach was pursued; this involved providing a range, based on median spend, for each of England, Scotland and Wales, and using those numbers to extrapolate values to those local authorities that did not provide data.

Splitting the analysis by each country, it first determined from the data received, the percentage of responses provided by local authorities that indicated they had a spend on animal welfare of £0. This represented 17% of local authorities in England, 0% of local authorities in Scotland, and 0% of local authorities in Wales. Following this, the median, 25th and 75th percentile spend of local authorities with spend greater than £0 was determined for each country. The extrapolation then worked as follows: within each country, for local authorities that failed to respond to the FOI request, £0 was allocated to the same percentage of authorities that had responded with £0. Following this, the median, 25th and 75th percentile value was allocated separately to each of the other local authorities. This modelled dataset was then joined to the data already received and used to create three different estimates for the overall spend on animal welfare in Great Britain and each of its constituent countries, with estimates based on the 25th, 50th and 75th percentile values to create a range. The output of this process estimates a median spend of £10 million (modelled using the 50th percentile values) by local authorities, with an estimated range between £8 million (modelled using the 25th percentile values) and £14 million (modelled using the 75th percentile values).

The 25th percentile, 75th percentile and median (50th percentile) values from the extrapolation, for each nation and Great Britain as a whole, are reflected in Table A10.

Table A10: Local government costs (excluding criminal justice system costs) by region, 2023/24 to 2025/26 annual average

Region	25th percentile	75th percentile	Median
England	£5,230,000	£9,320,000	£6,750,000
Scotland	£1,260,000	£2,460,000	£1,450,000
Wales	£1,570,000	£2,040,000	£1,800,000
Great Britain TOTAL	£8,100,000	£13,800,000	£10,000,000

7.2.5 Analysis of costs to other public agencies

FSA, FSS, Defra and APHA were contacted via FOI requests inquiring about costs of animal welfare monitoring, enforcement, and supporting activities. A positive detailed response was received from FSA and FSS. APHA and Defra responded to multiple requests saying that costs are not recorded against specific activities, and thus understanding the costs related to animal welfare enforcement is not possible.

FSA and FSS both provided a detailed breakdown of their budget for animal welfare inspections via an FOI request response. Using the FSA and FSS data, a 'cost per detected breach' was estimated and used to estimate the costs borne by APHA as a result of its inspections breaches. Using the breaches detected annually along with the annual cost (total for FSA and Annex 4 only for FSS) gives a 'cost per detected breach' of between £150 and £230. Given APHA detected 827 breaches across 2,530 inspections in 2024,⁷⁸ this would mean the annual cost of this may have been between £122,000 and £187,000. See Table A11 for further details.

Table A11: Unit cost estimate calculations for APHA inspections

Estimate	Value	Source
APHA inspections (2024)	2,530	Animal Law Foundation. The Enforcement Problem: 2024 data.
Breaches detected by APHA (2024)	827	Animal Law Foundation. The Enforcement Problem: 2024 data.
Cost per breach (FSA, 2025/26) – lower bound	£147	FOI response and 2025/26 animal welfare data
Cost per breach (FSS, 2025/26) – upper bound	£226	FOI response and 2025 animal welfare data
Total cost of APHA inspections (estimated)	£122,000 – £187,000	

Although APHA inspections and FSA inspections involve similar activities, this estimate should only be treated as indicative.⁷⁹ Moreover, this estimate combines preventative and reactive action, and only includes cost of detection and immediate action without any onward costs as the case moves through the enforcement process. This estimate was not used to generate the total estimate, which instead relies on a direct analysis of APHA's accounts, detailed below.

Separately, APHA published the amount of income received (via fees and charges) and expenditure incurred across the different services that APHA provides in its 2024/25 report.⁸⁰ Summing across requirements related to animal welfare – for example, the Animal Health (Miscellaneous Fees) Regulations 2013 (2018 amendments); The Disease of Animals (Approved Disinfectants) (Fees and Amendment) (England) Order 2011 (2022 amendments); The Animal By-Products and Pet Passport Fees (England) Regulations 2018; The Ivory Prohibitions (Exemptions) (Process and Procedure) Regulations 2022; and other animal health legislation – gives a total under-recovered cost of approximately £3.22 million. Since this cost is not recovered by fees and charges, it is borne by the government. However, this cost covers a broad range of activities that are meant to safeguard and protect animal welfare, ensuring compliance with existing legislation, and is not a direct result of non-compliance or offences.

Natural England supplied compliance and enforcement cost data for the three latest financial years across the following enforcement casework categories, which – as judged by Natural England – were relevant to our request for enforcement costs related to animal

harm: Agriculture including Heather and Grass Burning; Appeals against Enforcement Sanctions; Compliance Monitoring and Process Improvement; Environmental Damage Regulations; Sites of Special Scientific Interest; Species Regulation including Wildlife Crime and Licensing; and Working with other law enforcement agencies. Those costs totalled £630,000 in the 2025/26 financial year out of a net expenditure of approximately £300 million – 0.2% of total net expenditure.

Natural Resources Wales indicated that its 2025/26 expenditure was £328 million. Assuming a similar proportion of net expenditure to Natural England’s is spent on compliance and enforcement, this gives an approximate annual spend of £670,000.

NatureScot indicated that its total net expenditure in 2024/25 was £83.7 million. Assuming a similar proportion of net expenditure to Natural England’s is spent on compliance and enforcement, and uprating to 2025/26 prices, this gives an approximate annual spend of £180,000.

7.2.6 Analysis of costs to charities

It was determined that the Charity Commission’s Register of Charities (for England and Wales) would be the best and most reliable source for information regarding charity costs. A separate charities register exists for Scotland, but data from that register has not been used in this report. This is primarily because a number of important charities – such as Dogs Trust and the PDSA – are listed on both registers, creating the risk of double counting. Instead, Scotland has been accounted for by uprating the cost estimates based on the English and Wales charity register, using population data to generate a whole of Great Britain estimate.

To determine which charities would be included in the cost calculations, the following initial criteria were used: (1) animal-cruelty focused charities with an income greater than £1 million; and (2) charities that appear when ‘prevention of cruelty to animals’ is used as a search term on the charities register. It was found that this search term was suitable for capturing a wide-range of animal welfare and cruelty-related charities.

Table A12: Costs to other public agencies

Cost area	Estimated annual cost	Methodology and data robustness
FSA	£780,000	Includes the cost of the Welfare Assurance Team, CCTV checks, checks and breaches, serving and defending enforcement action, prosecutions, themed audits, exception reporting and enquiries, based on data supplied via FOI request response. Serving and defending enforcement actions and prosecutions accounts for around £106,687, but the reactive element cannot be isolated fully because the cost of dealing with breaches is grouped together with routine checks (£359,159). Some Welfare Assurance Team and other costs may also be partly reactive. Overall, this is a mixed cost, combining preventative, assurance and reactive activity.
FSS	£130,000	Includes inspection, verification, enforcement, data provision, training, stakeholder liaison and veterinary services, based on data supplied via FOI request response. These activities are reported in broad cost categories, meaning preventative and reactive expenditure cannot be separated. Overall, this is a mixed cost.
APHA	£3,220,000	Represents the under-recovered cost of services delivered under a range of animal health regulations, based on APHA annual accounts. APHA advised that it does not record costs against specific activities and was therefore unable to provide a cost specifically attributable to animal harm. The figure consequently covers a broader range of animal-health activity rather than only responses to abuse or neglect. This cost is likely to be mixed, but with a stronger preventative and regulatory component.
Natural England	£630,000	Based on compliance and enforcement cost data supplied. This includes activity relating to agriculture and heather and grass burning, appeals against enforcement sanctions, compliance monitoring and process improvement, environmental damage regulations, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, species regulation including wildlife crime and licensing, and working with other law enforcement agencies. These activities span monitoring, licensing, compliance and enforcement, so this is likely to be a mixed cost.
Natural Resources Wales	£670,000	Estimated by applying the proportion of Natural England’s overall budget spent on compliance and enforcement to Natural Resources Wales’ budget. As the underlying activity is expected to include both monitoring and enforcement functions, this is likely to be a mixed cost.
NatureScot	£180,000	Estimated by applying the proportion of Natural England’s overall budget spent on compliance and enforcement to NatureScot’s budget. As with Natural England and Natural Resources Wales, the relevant activity is likely to combine regulatory, monitoring and enforcement functions. This is therefore likely to be a mixed cost.
Great Britain TOTAL	Approximately £5.6 million	

The analysis focused on selecting charities that are believed to have substantial operations in Great Britain. Many of the animal harm charities listed on the register of charities are either primarily dedicated to operations conducted outside of Great Britain (e.g. Animals Asia Foundation) or operate in Great Britain alongside many other countries (e.g. World Animal Protection). In addition, many of the charities simply do not work for animal welfare at all – results from our search included organisations like the Honourable Artillery Company and British Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which have operations only tangential to animal welfare. Every single charity with revenue greater than £1m that came up in the search was manually assessed to understand its primary area of operation. If the charity was not substantially involved in animal harm or welfare, it was excluded from the subsequent calculations. Our search of charities with incomes over £1 million and which appeared with the search term ‘prevention of cruelty to animals’, returned 309 results; of these 108 charities were verified as meeting our criteria, representing 35% of charities. The full list of charities determined as meeting our criteria is listed at the end of this section.

Charities have been selected in cases where at least some of their operations work to directly respond to particular animal harm and welfare concerns. In most cases this is via providing sanctuary, medical care or rehoming services. Examples of these charities include the RSPCA, Dogs Trust, Cats Protection, and the Brooke Hospital for Animals. Charities that have limited or no operations directly responding to particular animal harm and welfare concerns have not been selected, even if they have a larger mission directed towards improving animal welfare. Examples of charities that have not been counted include the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, and BirdLife International. Wildlife trusts and zoological societies have been excluded as, while their operations certainly involve preserving animal habitats or caring for animals, they are largely not concerned with responding to animal welfare or cruelty concerns in the UK.

As a result of our selection criteria, our selection of charities has resulted in a charities cost figure that largely reflects reactive rather than preventative costs. But it is important to clarify that while charities have been included on the list as a result of having operations responding to animal welfare and cruelty concerns, this does not mean that they do not incur costs or also work preventatively for the reduction of animal harm. This is the case particularly with major charities on the list, such as the RSPCA, Dogs Trust and FOUR PAWS UK. As a consequence, it was determined that charity costs should be counted as mixed costs, likely leaning towards reactive costs. In addition, it is important to emphasise that the costs attributed to charities in our analysis cannot strictly be considered costs of animal harm as such. This is the case for many reasons. Many of these charities – such as Dogs Trust, or the numerous animal sanctuaries and animal homes – respond to animal needs, but may not be responding to a need created by animal harm. Animals may be in need without having endured any cruelty; for example, because their owner died suddenly or cannot afford to keep them. For this reason,

these costs reflect the wider costs of addressing animal welfare concerns more broadly, whether these originate in animal harm or not.

Charities that are focused almost entirely outside of Great Britain (decided by their name, or description of charity activities on the register) have been excluded. Some international charities with operations in Great Britain, such as Petplan Charitable Trust and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), have been included and tracked. Including these charities allows us to create multiple cost estimates, depending on desired scope – a smaller estimate based only on charities focused primarily on Great Britain, and a larger estimate including a limited number of international charities with operations in Great Britain.

For each charity on our list of animal harm charities operating in the UK, data was gathered regarding their income (and the portion of income due to donations and legacies) as well as their expenditure (and the portion of their expenditure due to charitable activities). Data was gathered based on the current most recent charity income and expenditure financial year reporting, up to 2025/26. Charities that have not reported since June 2024 were not included in the analysis, and all reported charity financial data used in the analysis is annual. As stated above, two different strands of cost calculation were pursued, one based on summing legacies and donations across the charities, and the other based on summing the expenditure on charitable activities across the charities. Within each strand, two further cost estimates were created: (1) a raw estimate, focusing only on the >£1 million income charities; and (2) a modelled estimate, including estimations for donations and expenditure due to animal harm from sub-£1 million income charities.

The modelled estimates were constructed as follows. The dataset of charities with more than £1 million in income was used to determine the proportion of charities that appeared in our searches and were genuinely animal harm-related – by recording which charities were included or excluded from our final list – and this produced the 35% figure. The calculations were based on the search for ‘prevention of cruelty to animals’, as this search returned a larger number of charities than similar searches such as ‘animal cruelty’, and likely significantly or totally overlapped with the latter’s search results. The detailed recording of income and expenditure data was also used to calculate the proportion of charity income from donations, and the proportion of charity expenditure from charitable activities. Finally, using the data it was possible to calculate the proportion of charitable expenditure that was from international charities.

For charities with income less than £1 million, the ‘prevention of cruelty to animals’ search of the charities register was repeated, and this returned 4,309 charities with incomes below £1 million. Using the charities register’s ‘export’ function, the headline income and expenditure data for each of these charities was extracted. Importantly, this export data did not include information regarding the proportion of income from donations or expenditure from charitable activities. The estimated values for donations and charitable activity expenditure for these sub-£1 million income charities were determined by combining this raw data with proportions

derived from our search of charities with incomes greater than £1 million. Taking donations income as an example, the estimate for sub-£1 million charities was determined with the following calculation: (total raw income across the charities)* (the proportion of charities that are relevant to our criterion – 35%)* (the proportion of income due to donations). A similar calculation was used to estimate charitable activities expenditure for sub-£1 million income charities. The full estimate was created by simply combining these modelled estimates with values drawn from our analysis of charities with incomes greater than £1 million.

Table A13: Donations and charitable expenditure of selected charities, Great Britain, based on latest annual financial reporting

Cost estimate—with international charities		Cost estimate—without international charities	
Donations	Charitable activity expenditure	Donations	Charitable activity expenditure
£943,200,000	£844,400,000	£819,600,000	£730,700,000

The full list of charities with incomes greater than £1 million that met our criteria are as follows:

1. Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
2. Dogs Trust
3. The People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA)
4. Cats Protection
5. Battersea Dogs & Cats Home
6. The Donkey Sanctuary
7. Blue Cross
8. World Animal Protection
9. The Brooke Hospital for Animals
10. Woodgreen Pets Charity
11. International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)
12. Redwings Horse Sanctuary
13. Working Animals International
14. World Horse Welfare
15. Worldwide Veterinary Service
16. The Cinnamon Trust
17. Bransby Horses
18. The Mare and Foal Sanctuary
19. Farplace Animal Rescue
20. RSPCA Bath and District Branch⁸¹
21. FOUR PAWS UK
22. The Raystede Centre for Animal Welfare Limited

23. Celia Hammond Animal Trust
24. Woodside Animal Welfare Trust
25. Humane World for Animals UK
26. Greyhound Trust
27. International Animal Rescue
28. The League Against Cruel Sports
29. National Animal Welfare Trust
30. The Birmingham Dogs Home
31. The Mayhew Home⁸⁴
32. Margaret Green Animal Rescue
33. International Cat Care
34. The Wildlife Hospital Foundation
35. The Horse Trust
36. People for Animal Care Trust (PACT)
37. Many Tears Animal Rescue
38. Oak Tree Animals' Charity
39. RSPCA Halifax, Huddersfield, Bradford & District Branch
40. RSPCA Llys Nini Carmarthenshire to Cardiff, Sir Gâr i Gaerdydd Branch
41. Newcastle Dog and Cat Shelter
42. RSPCA Norwich Branch
43. Hope Rescue
44. Shrimp Welfare Project
45. The Ferne Animal Sanctuary
46. Isle of Wight Donkey Sanctuary
47. RSPCA Cotswolds, Gloucester & District Branch
48. Animals in Distress (Torbay and Westcountry)
49. RSPCA Bristol & District Branch
50. The Wildlife Aid Foundation
51. RSPCA Brighton & the Heart of Sussex
52. The Cat and Rabbit Rescue Centre
53. Bleakholt Animal Sanctuary
54. RSPCA Leicestershire, Peterborough & Rutland Branch
55. Gloucestershire Animal Welfare Association and Cheltenham Animal Shelter
56. The Flicka Foundation
57. Manchester and District Home for Lost Dogs Limited
58. Jerry Green Dog Rescue
59. North Clwyd Animal Rescue

- 60. RSPCA Devon Branch
- 61. The Lord Whisky Sanctuary Fund
- 62. Oxfordshire Animal Sanctuary Society
- 63. RSPCA Central London Branch
- 64. The Humane League UK
- 65. RSPCA Solent Branch
- 66. RSPCA North Wiltshire & Newbury District Branch
- 67. RSPCA Suffolk Central Branch
- 68. RSPCA Hillingdon, Slough, Windsor, Kingston & District Branch
- 69. Wotton Animal Rescue
- 70. Friends of the Animals
- 71. Cornwall Animal Hospital Charity
- 72. RSPCA Burton upon Trent & District Branch
- 73. RSPCA Danaher Animal Home
- 74. RSPCA Leeds, Wakefield & District Branch
- 75. The Leicester and Leicestershire Animal Aid Association
- 76. The Royal Veterinary College Animal Care Trust
- 77. RSPCA York, Harrogate & District Branch
- 78. Petplan Charitable Trust
- 79. Friends of Animals League
- 80. Secret World Wildlife Rescue
- 81. RSPCA Coventry and District Branch
- 82. Retraining of Racehorses
- 83. RSPCA Derby & District Branch
- 84. RSPCA Sussex West Branch
- 85. Carla Lane Animals in Need
- 86. Pawprints to Freedom Limited
- 87. The Kit Wilson Trust for Animal Welfare
- 88. HorseWorld Trust
- 89. Animal Rescue Cumbria (The Wainwright Shelter)
- 90. Suffolk Owl Sanctuary
- 91. Holly Hedge Animal Sanctuary
- 92. The Parrot Zoo Trust
- 93. Freshfields Animal Rescue
- 94. Dogstar Foundation
- 95. Cat Action Trust 1977
- 96. Horses and Ponies Protection Association

- 97. RSPCA Cornwall Branch
- 98. RSPCA Essex Mid & North Branch
- 99. RSPCA Sheffield Branch
- 100. Cramar Cat Rescue
- 101. StreetVet
- 102. British Hen Welfare Trust
- 103. RSPCA Bury Oldham & District Branch
- 104. Cuan Wildlife Rescue
- 105. RSPCA North West London & South Hertfordshire Branch
- 106. Hopefield Animal Sanctuary
- 107. Olsen Animal Trust
- 108. The Pets at Home Foundation



7.3 Stakeholder engagement

For the first report, WPI Economics mapped stakeholders with potentially relevant data on the scale of animal harm in Great Britain. The RSPCA reviewed the initial list, discussed it with WPI Economics and supplied contacts where available; WPI Economics sourced alternative contacts where necessary.

WPI reached out to 22 organisations and received a response from 18 organisations, as detailed in Table A14.

Table A14: Stakeholder engagement list

Contacted originally	Initial response received
Animal and Plant Health Agency	No
Animal Law Foundation	Yes
Badger Trust	Yes
Bat Conservation Trust	Yes
Blue Cross	Yes
Border Force	Yes
British Veterinary Association	Yes
Dogs Trust Puppy Smuggling Taskforce	Yes
Food Standards Agency	No
FOUR PAWS UK	Yes
League Against Cruel Sports	Yes
National Animal Welfare Trust	Yes
National Crime Agency	No
National Wildlife Crime Unit	Yes
Natural England	Yes
Natural Resources Wales	Yes
NatureScot	Yes
Naturewatch Foundation	Yes
PDSA	No
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	Yes
SSPCA	Yes
Wildlife and Countryside Link	Yes

Following the data being shared or signposted, WPI Economics had follow-up conversations with six organisations: Animal Law Foundation; Badger Trust; FOUR PAWS UK; League Against Cruel Sports; National Wildlife Crime Unit; and NatureScot; with the aim of ensuring the data available from those organisations was used appropriately in the report. Ultimately, of the 22 organisations contacted originally, data from 18 organisations was used in the scale report, with data and information supplied by a further three organisations – Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and NatureScot – used in the cost report. The majority of the data comes from public releases since, broadly speaking, animal welfare stakeholders mostly told us all data they hold is routinely published. The only organisation originally contacted whose data was not ultimately used in the report was the British Veterinary Association, which advised us that it does not hold any data on animal harm.





Endnotes

1 The report covers Great Britain as a whole, although some data are available separately for England, Wales and Scotland and other sources are UK-wide.

2 Wyjadlowska et al. (2026) The scale of reported illegal animal abuse and neglect in Great Britain. Available at: <https://evidence-centre.rspca.org.uk/w/research/library/the-scale-of-reported-illegal-animal-abuse-and-neglect-in-great-britain>

3 Charities’ expenditure data reflects the most up-to-date charity financial reporting on the charities register. For more information, see section 7.2.6 in the Technical Annex.

4 Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (2025) Animal welfare strategy for England. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/animal-welfare-strategy-for-england/animal-welfare-strategy-for-england#farmed-animals-1>

5 The Green Book is the UK government’s guidance on appraisal, the process of assessing the costs, benefits and risks of different options for achieving government objectives. HM Treasury, Government Finance Function (2026) The Green Book. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-green-book-appraisal-and-evaluation-in-central-government/the-green-book-2026>

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9 Under the Freedom of Information Act (2000), certain public organisations are required to respond to requests for information within 20 working days of a valid written request. In this time, they must confirm whether they hold the requested information and, if so, provide it. Organisations can refuse to fulfil an FOI request if it would be too costly, if the data is privileged, or if information is not held in the requested form.

10 Wyjadlowska et al. (2026) The scale of reported illegal animal abuse and neglect in Great Britain. Available at: <https://evidence-centre.rspca.org.uk/w/research/library/the-scale-of-reported-illegal-animal-abuse-and-neglect-in-great-britain>

11 There were 14 in England and Wales and four in Scotland.

12 Wyjadlowska et al. (2026) The scale of reported illegal animal abuse and neglect in Great Britain. Available at: <https://evidence-centre.rspca.org.uk/w/research/library/the-scale-of-reported-illegal-animal-abuse-and-neglect-in-great-britain>

13 XL bully costs may overlap to some extent with the wider police response estimate, so the combined figure should be interpreted cautiously.

14 See Technical Annex for full methodology and data robustness explanations.

15 Using a conservative assumption of proxying total number of offences with prosecution numbers.

16 NRCN indicated the livestock coordinator role is the only relevant role to ‘animal-related crime’.

17 Assuming 75% of costs projected by NPCC.

18 Assuming 125% of costs projected by NPCC.

19 NPCC (2025) Police seize more than 4500 XL Bully dogs since ban. Available at: <https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/police-seize-more-than-4500-xl-bully-dogs-since-ban>

20 Wyjadłowska et al. (2026) The scale of reported illegal animal abuse and neglect in Great Britain. Available at: <https://evidence-centre.rspca.org.uk/w/research/library/the-scale-of-reported-illegal-animal-abuse-and-neglect-in-great-britain>

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22 Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (2026) Scotland's prosecution service. Available at: <https://www.copfs.gov.uk/>

23 See Technical Annex for full methodology and data robustness explanations.

24 Crown Prosecution Service (2026) What we do (and what we don't do). Available at: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/about-cps/what-we-do>

25 Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (2024) Our role in the justice process. Available at: <https://www.copfs.gov.uk/about-copfs/our-role-in-the-justice-process/>

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28 Wyjadłowska et al. (2026) The scale of reported illegal animal abuse and neglect in Great Britain. Available at: <https://evidence-centre.rspca.org.uk/w/research/library/the-scale-of-reported-illegal-animal-abuse-and-neglect-in-great-britain>

29 Wyjadłowska et al. (2026) The scale of reported illegal animal abuse and neglect in Great Britain. Available at: <https://evidence-centre.rspca.org.uk/w/research/library/the-scale-of-reported-illegal-animal-abuse-and-neglect-in-great-britain>

30 These figures should not be interpreted as a direct estimate of the cost of animal abuse. They provide an indication of the scale of charitable resources associated with organisations that prevent and respond to animal harm and wider animal welfare needs, rather than the proportion that can be attributed solely to abuse.

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59 Under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, certain public organisations are required to respond to requests for information within 20 working days of a valid written request. In this time, they must confirm whether they hold the requested information and if so, provide it. Organisations can refuse to fulfil an FOI request if it would be too costly, if the data is privileged, or if information is not held in the requested form.

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62 Using a conservative assumption of proxying total number of offences with prosecution numbers.

63 NRCN indicated the livestock coordinator role is the only relevant role to ‘animal-related crime’.

64 Assuming 75% of costs projected by NPCC.

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66 NPCC (2025) Police seize more than 4500 XL Bully dogs since ban. Available at: <https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/police-seize-more-than-4500-xl-bully-dogs-since-ban>

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79 FSA veterinarians carry out animal welfare inspections at slaughterhouses. They can inspect animals, carcasses, premises, vehicles and equipment, observe activities, check documents and collect evidence. Where a breach occurs within the slaughterhouse, it falls within FSA's remit. FSA can also identify breaches that occurred on farms or during transport. These are referred to APHA or local authorities for investigation and potential enforcement. APHA farm inspections are similar. Inspectors examine animals and the conditions in which they are kept, including buildings and fields, and can review relevant records. They assess compliance with animal welfare legislation and record the outcome of the visit. Where serious non-compliance is found, APHA can refer the case to the relevant local authority for enforcement.

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81 The RSPCA Bath and District Branch recently merged with the North Somerset branch to form the RSPCA Bath and North Somerset Branch.

82 The Mayhew Home rebranded to Mayhew in 2017, but continues to be listed as The Mayhew Home on the charities register.



WPI Economics Limited
5–6 St Matthew Street
London
SW1P 2JT
@WPI_Economics
wpieconomics.com

WPI Economics Limited, registered address:
Suite 301, Stanmore Business and Innovation
Centre, Howard Road, Stanmore, Middlesex,
HA7 1FW, England, is registered as a limited
company in England and Wales under
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