

Animal Welfare Report 2019



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk





Introduction

In Northern Ireland, the welfare of animals is governed by the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the 2011 Act). The 2011 Act includes a duty of care in respect of all animals under the permanent or temporary control of a person. Responsibility for the welfare of an animal remains with the relevant owner at all times.

The review of the implementation of the 2011 Act which took place in 2014 to 2016 recommended that the then Department of Agriculture and Rural Development publish an annual report setting out information relevant to animal welfare enforcement. This is the fourth report published using information provided by the three enforcement bodies and detailing the range and level of animal welfare enforcement activities that took place during 2019.

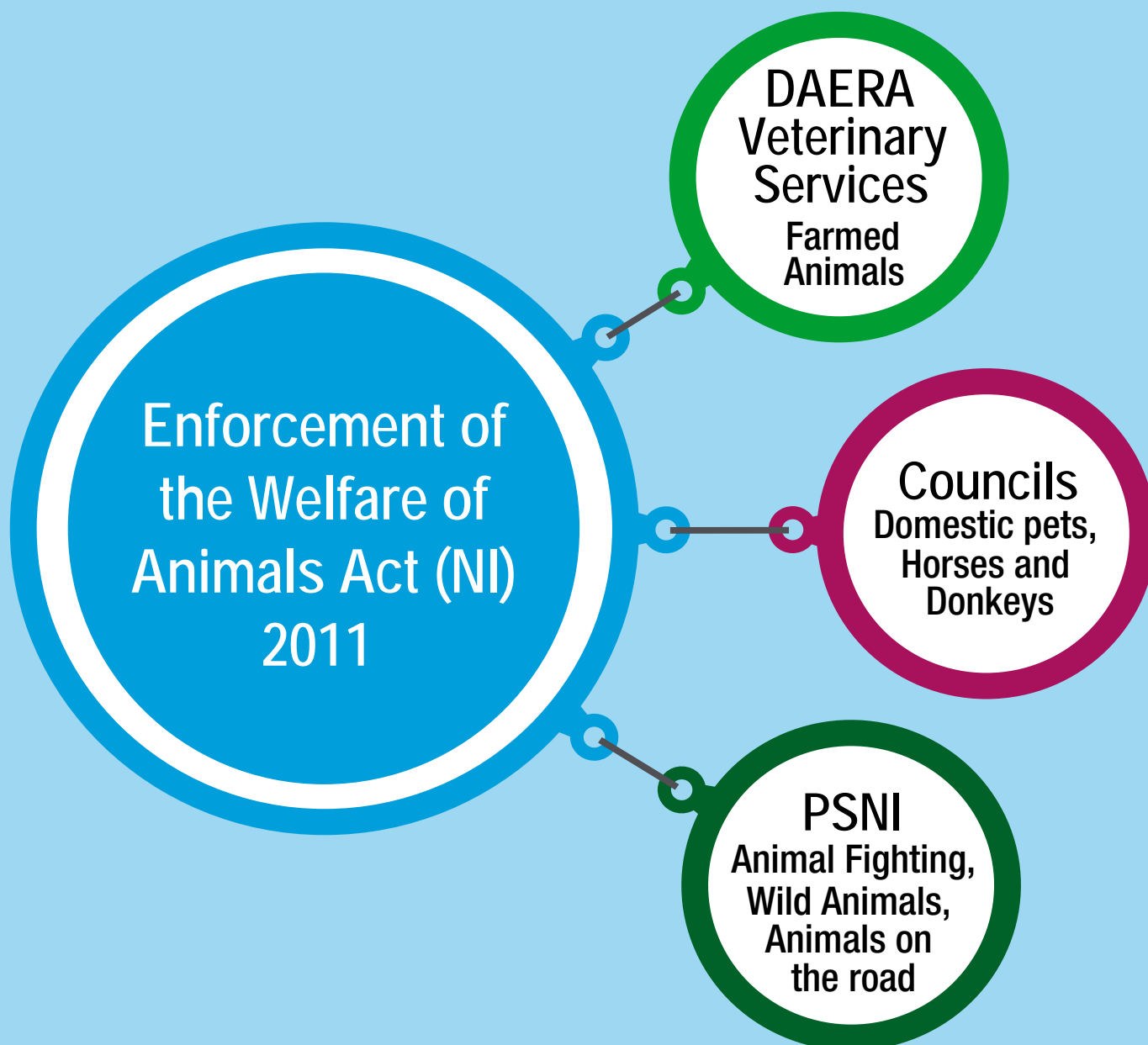
Background

The 2011 Act provides the same level of protection for both farmed and non-farmed animals and sets out the five needs of an animal.

The vast majority of owners and keepers comply with their duty of care. However, there are occasions when owners fail to do so and the 2011 Act sets out offences regarding animal welfare. For example, it is an offence to fail to take reasonable steps to ensure that the welfare needs of an animal are met or to take action, or fail to take action, that causes an animal to suffer unnecessarily.



Responsibility for the enforcement of the 2011 Act has been conferred on three enforcement agencies; Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and local councils.



If a member of the public has any concerns regarding the welfare of an animal they should contact the relevant enforcement body. Contact information can be found in the [nidirect.gov.uk Animal Welfare section](https://nidirect.gov.uk/Animal-Welfare-section). Full details of all complaints will be recorded and passed to enforcement officers who will investigate and take action to ensure the owner or keeper complies with his or her obligations.



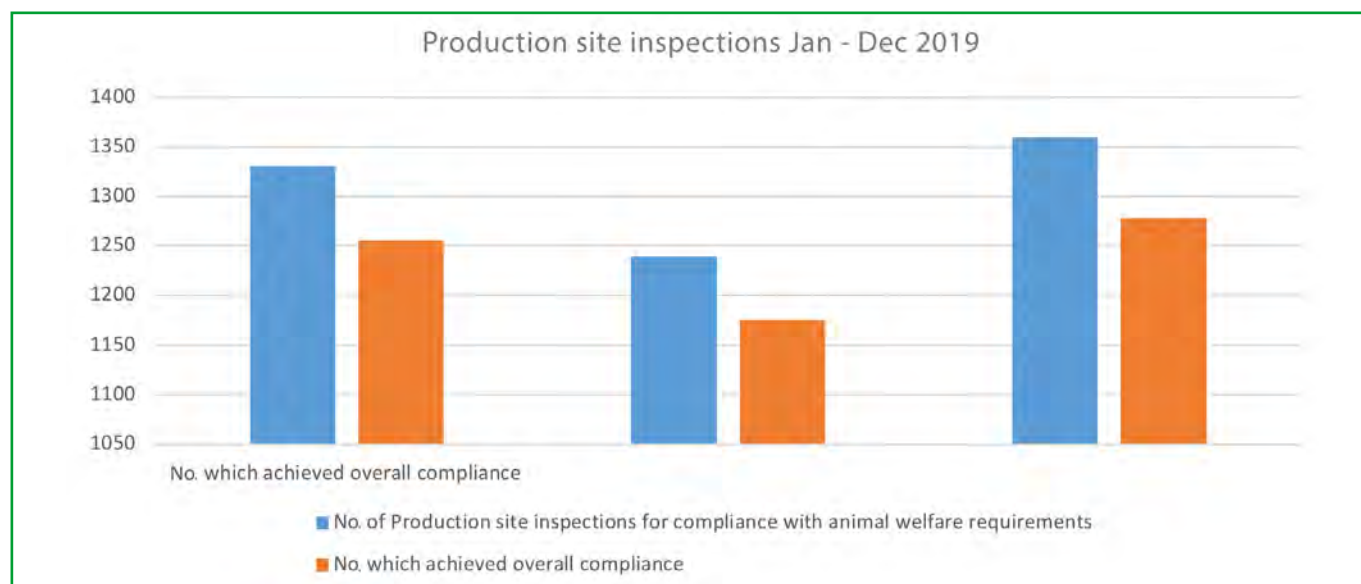
DAERA enforces the Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 (the 2012 Regulations) which were made under the 2011 Act. The work is delivered by DAERA Veterinary Service Inspectors and Veterinary Officers located across Northern Ireland in 10 local DAERA Direct offices. DAERA also has responsibility for the licensing and inspection of pet shops, animal boarding, riding and zoological establishments under the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 1972.

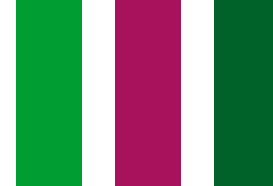
Veterinary Service Inspectors may utilise a range of options when dealing with an animal welfare case. For example, they may provide advice, give a warning, issue the owner with a legally binding Improvement Notice or initiate a prosecution.

The following information outlines the enforcement actions taken by DAERA during 2019.

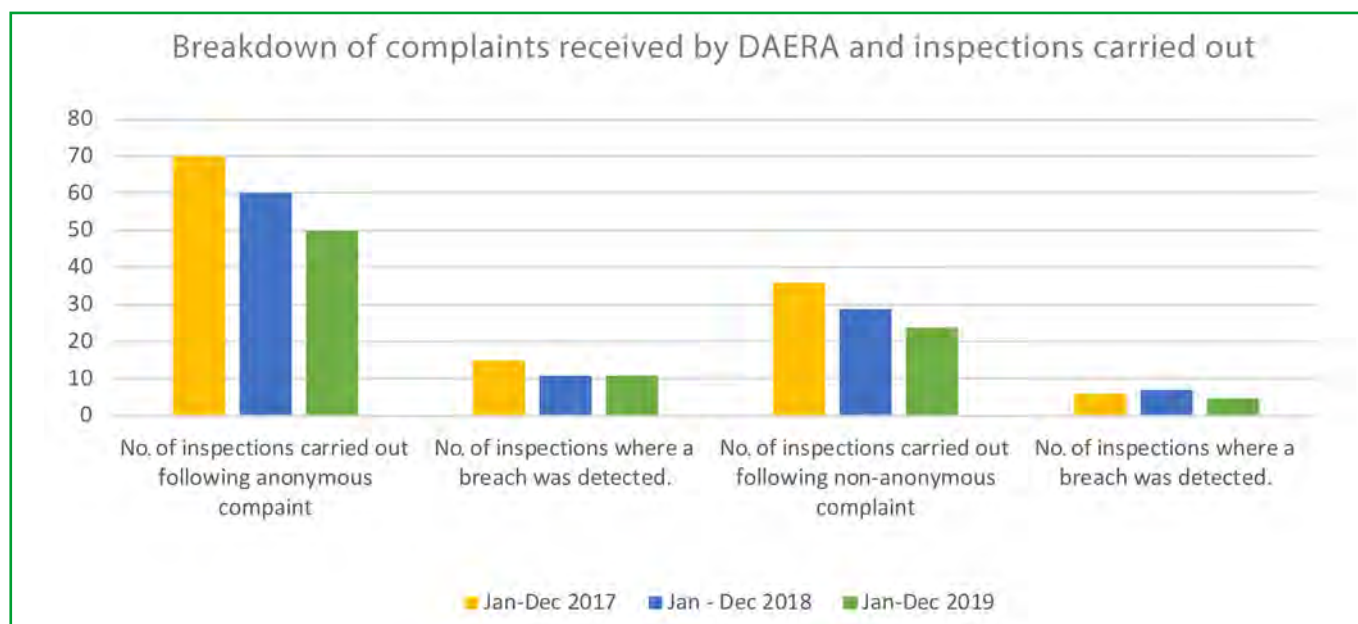
Farmed Animal Welfare Inspections

From 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2019, 1360 production site inspections for compliance with animal welfare requirements were completed. Some of these inspections were at randomly selected sites. The overall compliance rate was 94%. This was a decrease of 1% when compared with the period from 1 January 2018 to December 2018 and was the same rate of compliance as the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017.





Breakdown of complaints received by DAERA and inspections carried out.	Jan - Dec 2017	Jan - Dec 2018	Jan - Dec 2019
No. of inspections carried out following anonymous complaint.	70	60	50
No. of inspections where a breach was detected on anonymous complaint.	15	11	11
No. of inspections carried out following non-anonymous complaint.	36	29	24
No. of inspections where a breach was detected on non-anonymous complaint.	6	7	5
No. of convictions.	8	7	5
No. of welfare seizures	0	0	0
Total no. of animals seized.	0	0	0



Welfare of Animals investigations closed during period 1 January 2019 to December 2019

Case withdrawn	Compliance achieved	Warning letter issued	Formal caution delivered	Convicted in court	Dismissed in court	Total
0	0	0	0	5	0	5

The penalties for animal welfare convictions included fines, liability for costs, community service and disqualification from keeping animals.



Regional Councils' Animal Welfare Service

The 2011 Act requires local councils to enforce animal welfare requirements in respect of non-farmed animals, for example, domestic pets of any vertebrate species and equines. Councils have adopted a collaborative regional approach to delivering its animal welfare service with nine appointed Animal Welfare Officers enforcing the Act. These officers have statutory enforcement powers and can take a range of action to improve the welfare of non-farmed animals including: providing advice; issuing improvement notices; taking animals into their possession (in extreme cases of suffering), and initiating prosecution action. The following information outlines the enforcement action taken by local councils during 2019.

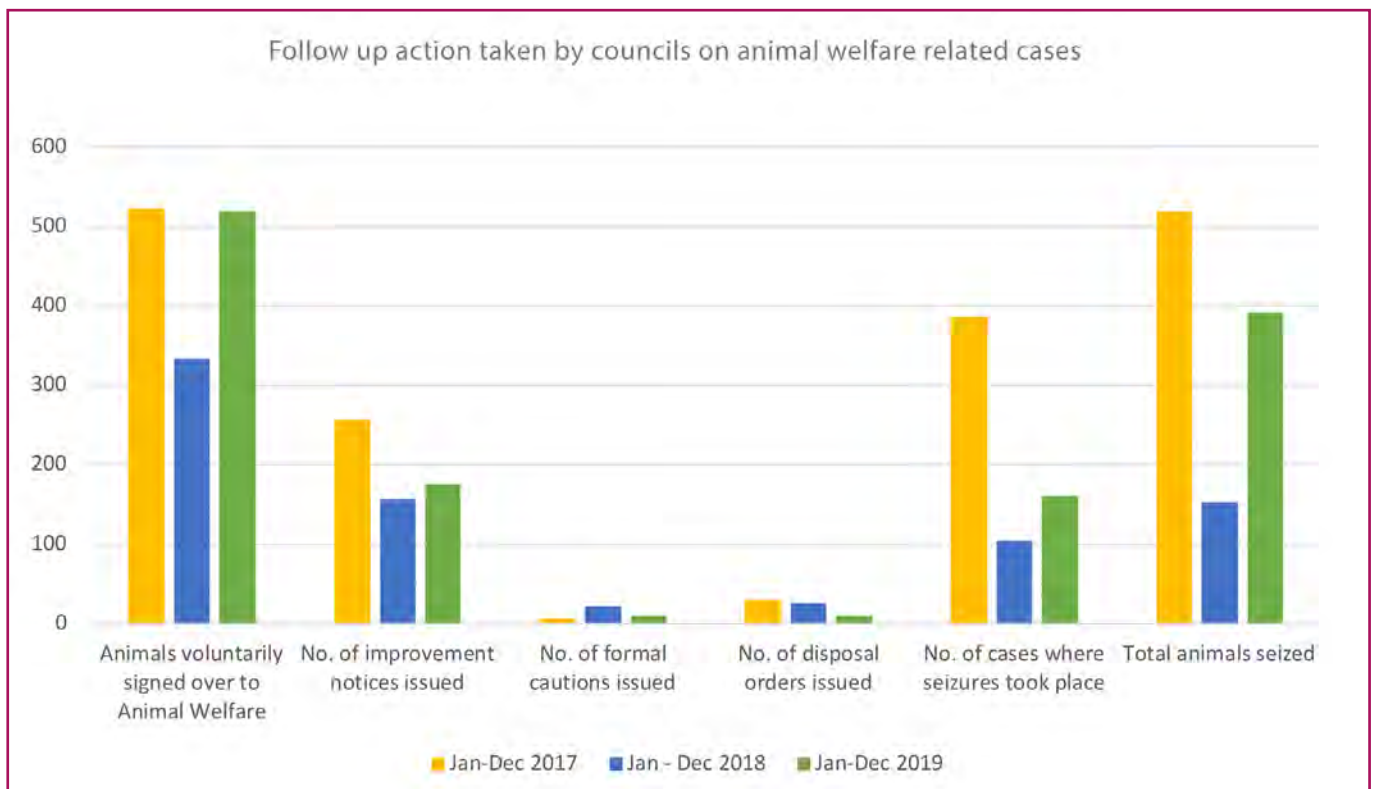
Breakdown of complaints received by Animal Welfare sections of local councils and visits carried out.	Jan - Dec 2017	Jan - Dec 2018	Jan - Dec 2019
No. of complaints received.	6414	6480	5885
No. of complaints received established to be non-welfare related cases.	1240	948	911
No. of complaints received established to be animal welfare related cases.	5174	5532	4974
No. of visits carried out (some cases may have required more than one visit).	9189	9553	8998
No. of cases established to be unfounded following visits by animal welfare officers..	420	300	232





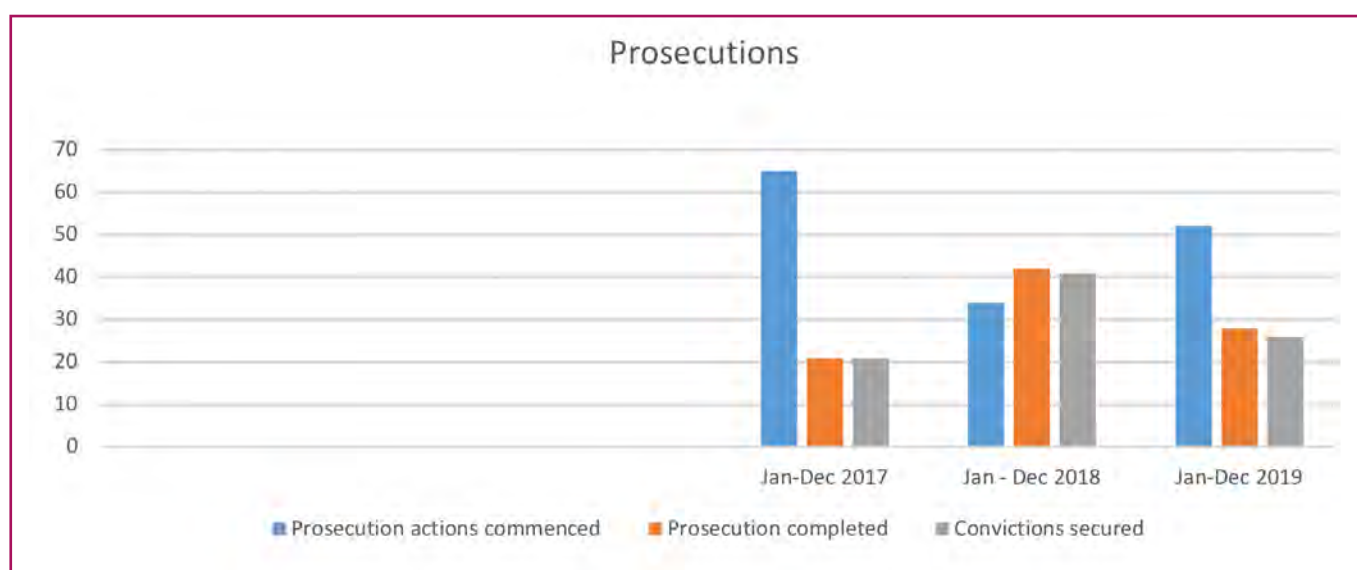
Follow up action taken by Animal Welfare sections of Councils on animal welfare related cases.	Jan - Dec 2017	Jan - Dec 2018	Jan - Dec 2019
Animals voluntarily signed over to local councils.	523	334	518
No. of improvement notices issued.	257	156	176
No. of formal cautions issued.	6	21	9
No. of disposal orders issued.	29	25	9
No. of cases where seizures took place.	386	104	161
Total no. of animals seized.	518	152	391

* All contact visits received informal advice, unless they **result** in formal action.





Prosecutions by councils.	Jan - Dec 2017	Jan - Dec 2018	Jan - Dec 2019
Prosecution actions commenced.	65	34	52
Prosecution completed.	21	42	28
Convictions secured.	21	41	26



Prosecutions completed may refer to prosecutions commenced in a previous year.

The 26 convictions in 2019 resulted in a variety of penalties comprising of fines, liability for costs, community service, conditional discharge, restrictions or bans on keeping animals and custodial sentences.

Breakdown of follow up action taken by councils on non-animal welfare related cases.	Jan - Dec 2017	Jan - Dec 2018	Jan - Dec 2019
No. referred to DAERA, (e.g. farmed animal complaints).	82	75	60
No. referred to dog wardens (e.g. stray dogs).	505	342	329
No. referred to Environmental Health (e.g. dirty yards/noise complaints).	19	35	32
No. referred to PSNI (e.g. animal fighting/snared animals/straying on roads).	70	48	43
No. classified as others (e.g. queries relating to rehoming or adopting referred to animal sanctuaries).	564	448	447

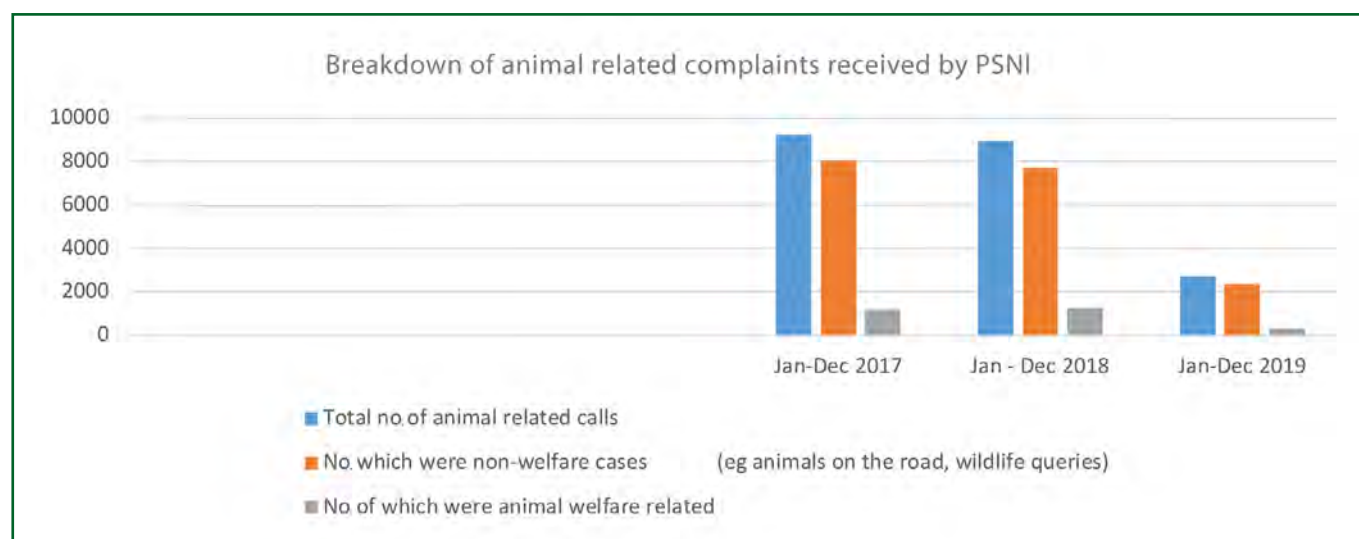


Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)

The 2011 Act gives the PSNI power to deal with animal fighting. In addition to its responsibilities under the 2011 Act, the PSNI has responsibility for animals on roads and wildlife crime. It also deals with offences involving wild animals and other animal-related criminal activities.

Breakdown of complaints received by PSNI and enforcement action taken.	Jan - Dec 2017	Jan - Dec 2018	Jan - 20th May 2019*
No. of complaints received which were in respect of animal related incidents.	9237	8957	2688
No. of complaints which were in respect of non-welfare cases (e.g. animals on the road, wildlife queries).	8046	7696	2342
No. of complaints which were established to be animal welfare related.	1191	1261	346

*Unfortunately due to a change in the PSNI computer system PSNI is unable to provide the statistics from 21 May to 31 Dec 2019.





Follow up enforcement actions taken by PSNI.	Jan - Dec 2017	Jan - Dec 2018	Jan - Dec 2019
No. of incidents which led to seizure.	22	28	32
Total no. of animals seized.	54	106	122
No. of offences prosecuted.	46	19	20
No. of prosecutions resulting in conviction.	9	11	12
Penalties incurred in relation to the convictions.	<p style="text-align: center;"> 3 probation orders 1 conditional discharge 3 monetary penalties 3 prison committal 1 crown court imprisonment 1 suspended sentence </p>		

A variety of actions were taken by PSNI on the reported animal welfare/cruelty related cases. For example:

- information/advice dispensed with no visit required;
- visits were carried out and information/advice was dispensed; and
- referrals made to another agency as appropriate e.g. local council or DAERA.

PLEASE REFER TO THE DAERA WEBSITE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON ANIMAL WELFARE. CONTACT DETAILS ARE AVAILABLE THERE IF YOU WISH TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE ABOUT AN ANIMAL WELFARE RELATED ISSUE

www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/introduction-animal-welfare



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

