



POSITIVE ABOUT PETS



PETS ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND ECONOMIC FABRIC OF THE UK.

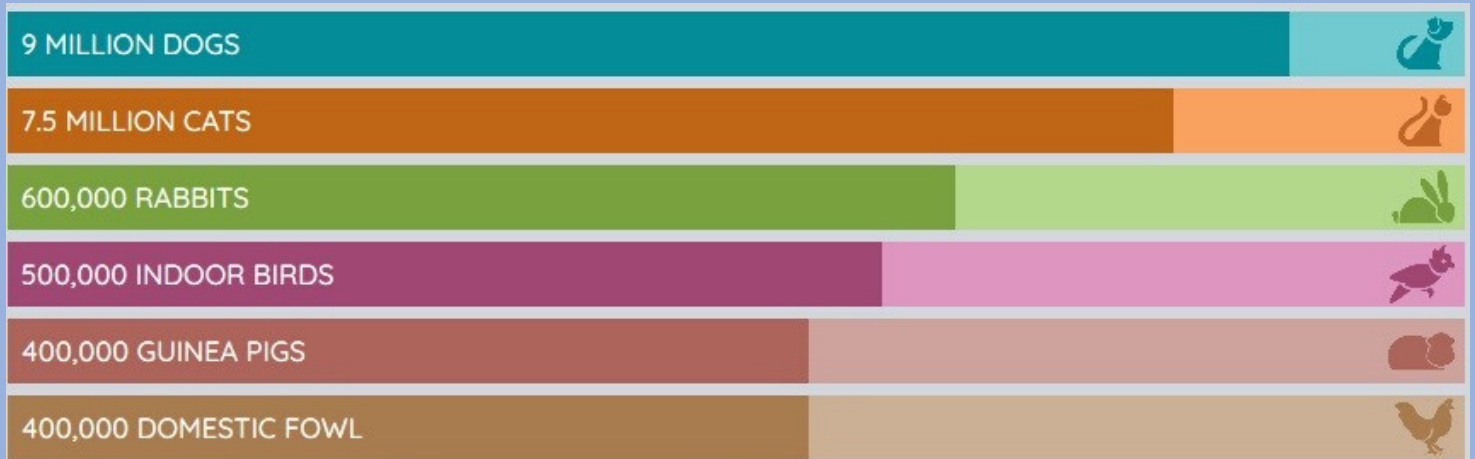
Dogs and cats are probably the first animals people think about when they talk about pets, but there is a significant number and **variety of other furry, feathered, scaly and wet animals** that we share our homes with.



Many of them would come under the 'exotic' pet label, including for example tropical fish, tortoises, bearded dragons, chinchillas, and Syrian hamsters.



A SNAPSHOT OF PET OWNERSHIP IN THE UK IN 2020



1

2,500,000 snakes



3,000,000 lizards



1,000,000 tortoises
and turtles



500,000 amphibians



2



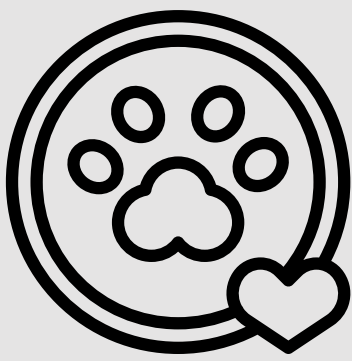
100million+ pet fish

3

12 MILLION UK HOUSEHOLDS (41%) HAVE A PET.

"Having tropical fish in the house acts as a calming remedy for my autistic child. The calm nature and routine of feeding and cleaning help give my child a safe time and place to be."





PETS ARE GOOD FOR US

It is important to protect access to all responsibly sourced pets (whether considered 'exotic' or not) because they contribute to our physical and mental health as well as the economy.

- A recent study shows that 67% people believe having a pet provides companionship and friendship and 52% believe that pets help those who may be feeling lonely. Even before lockdown over 9 million people in the UK have said they often feel lonely.⁴
- Pets help children to develop and learn – pets may motivate children to learn and use words associated with them, develop higher autonomy, self-esteem, motivation, focus and perseverance skills. The presence of a pet in the classroom may lead to more positive attitudes to school and learning.⁵
- Studies have shown the therapeutic effects of being with an animal could benefit patients and save the NHS £2.45 billion a year. (£2.7 billion in today's prices)
- Pets help reduce blood pressure, heart rate and stress – just stroking pets or watching fish swim in an aquarium leads to reduced blood pressure and lower anxiety.⁷ The presence of a pet can reduce the heart rate even in stressful conditions.⁸
- Pets in care homes can prevent loneliness. Aquariums have been found to improve behaviour and staff satisfaction in dementia units.⁹ An aquarium in the dining room improved appetite among residents.¹⁰
- Pets help people connect with nature!¹¹ A beautiful reptile vivarium or tropical fish aquarium brings a direct connection with nature right into our homes in this increasingly urbanised world.
- Caring for a pet, whether it's a rat, guinea pig, budgerigar or leopard gecko, helps us all to develop a greater compassion for animals and a better understanding of the natural world.

PETS ARE GOOD FOR THE UK ECONOMY

- Owners spend around £8+ billion a year on their pets including foods, accessories and veterinary care.¹²
- This generates taxes of more than £2.7 billion annually.¹³
- And leads to the employment of over 50,000 people.¹⁴
- Pets are good for our health and are estimated to save the NHS at least £2.7 billion every year, which could be a conservative estimate.¹⁵



The benefits of pet ownership, in terms of tax generated and NHS spending spared, is about £5.4 billion a year.¹⁶

(pre-Covid19 pandemic figures)



"I love my fish like any other pet – I currently have 25 and they all have a name!"

IT IS IMPORTANT TO SUPPORT ACCESS TO A WIDE VARIETY OF PET OWNERSHIP

Not every pet is for everyone

Dogs and cats make great pets but not everyone wants or can share their home with them. They might be allergic to fur, their landlord might forbid it, their home/garden might not be suitable, long working hours means they can't commit to providing the best care, or rescue centres might not think their home circumstances match the needs of the pet. Exotic pets like tropical fish, reptiles, birds and small mammals give people the health benefits of companion animals, including a strong emotional bond, but within the constraints of busy, modern lives.

Good pet shops are good places to buy some pets

Good pet shops inspire because of the enthusiasm and knowledge of their staff. Pet shop licensing requires staff to be trained in all the species they sell so they can check their customers' knowledge and set-up before they sell any animal. Contrary to popular opinion good pet shops do play a role in stopping impulse buying. And they are open to scrutiny from customers every day they are open.

Specialist knowledge

Many owners turn the love of their pet into a full-blown hobby. Bird fanciers, reptile and fish keepers become fascinated with the geography, biology, history, and chemistry of the species they keep which develops into a growing empathy for the conservation of the wild eco-systems they come from. Hobbyists also contribute to saving species by maintaining captive populations extinct in the wild.

Sustainable livelihoods

A small number of the pets we share our homes with are either caught in the wild (eg marine tropical fish) or captive bred. This provides valuable livelihoods in parts of the world where there are not many alternative ways to earn a living. These countries don't enjoy the societal safety nets we have in the West and sustainable sourcing of wildlife enables people to make a living from the natural resources on their doorstep. Limiting the animals people can keep could have a huge impact on these communities,¹⁷ as well as unintended costs such as turning to more environmentally damaging occupations, increasing pressures on permitted species or even more poaching, as banned species increase in value.

Nothing positive about positive lists or bans

Some people argue that a positive list of pets is the panacea to the issue of poor and illegal pet keeping. But creating more regulation that isn't well-enforced is no solution to anything. Educating people to pick the right pet for their lifestyle and care for it properly is the key to happy and healthy pets. Rather than pet bans we should look at ways to support people to successfully keep their pets throughout their life, and properly enforce current laws.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT PET OWNERSHIP

Everyone should be able to enjoy the benefits of keeping any legally acquired pet they choose, as long as they care for it properly. We are looking to continue delivering high quality joined up advice on responsible procurement of pets and their lifetime care and welfare for owners.

WE ASK YOU TO:

- Support pet ownership in all its forms by resisting calls for bans on wildlife or attempts to limit ownership through positive lists. We ask you to protect people's access to a wide range of pets, including responsibly sourced wild taken and captive bred species, like tropical fish and reptiles, which offer sustainable livelihoods to people in some of the world's poorest countries.
- Protect pet shops' ability to sell live animals because they are great places to buy some pets. We ask you to show your support for your local pet shop continuing to sell some live animals because buying animals online is not always the best way to welcome a new addition to the family.
- Make pet ownership easier by encouraging pet positive policies in rented accommodation. We ask you to protect people's ability to move with their pets so that they don't have to give them up whenever they move.

WE ARE POSITIVE ABOUT PETS:



info@ornamentalfish.org



info@pfma.org.uk



Sustainable Users Network

- [1] PFMA Kantar Survey, Jan 2020
- [2] Reptile and Exotic Pet Trade Association
- [3] Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association
- [4] National Office of Animal Health (NOAH 2019)
- [5] The Effects of Animals on Human Health and Well-Being Deborah L. Wells Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 65, No. 3, 2009, pp. 523–543 “the literature reviewed is largely supportive of the widely held, and long-standing, belief that “pets are good for us.” <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2009.01612.x/abstract?deniedAccessCustomisedMessage=&userIsAuthenticated=false>
- [6] Companion Animal Economics, Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI); Bank of England inflation calculator
- [7] The AQUARIUM Therapy: Positive Effects of Fish- Keeping on Health and Life Omkar Pokharkar D.Y. Patil University, school of biotechnology and bioinformatics, C.B.D Belapur, Navi Mumbai, - 400614.
- [8] Pet ownership and human health: a brief review of evidence and issues, June McNicholas, Andrew Gilbey, Ann Rennie, Sam Ahmedzai, Jo-Ann Dono, Elizabeth Ormerod BMJ 2005;331:1252–5 <http://www.bmj.com/content/bmj/331/7527/1252.full.pdf>
- [9] Edwards NE, et al Influence of aquariums on resident behaviour and staff satisfaction in dementia units West J. Nurs. Res. 2014 Nov 36(10) <http://wjn.sagepub.com/content/36/10/1309.abstract>
- [10] Edwards NE, The influence of aquariums on weight in individuals with dementia Alzheimer Dis. Assoc. Disord. 2013 Oct-Dec 27 (4) 379–83 http://journals.lww.com/alzheimerjournal/Abstract/2013/10000/The_Influence_of_Aquariums_on_Weight_in.13.aspx
- [11] Pederson, I., Martinsen, E W Berget, B. & Braastad, B.O. (2012). Farm animal_ assisted intervention for people with for people with clinical depression, a randomised controlled task Anthrozoos, 25, 149–160.
- [12] <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/family-spending/family-spending/2014-edition/art-appendix-a.html> [Table 1 A Commodity or Service Code 9.5.3 Accessed December 8 2014]
- [13] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tax_revenue_statistics [Table 1 Accessed 15 December 2014 Working assumption that retail sales are equivalent to GDP]
- [14] <http://www.lantra.co.uk/Industries/Animal-Care.aspx>
- [15] Companion Animal Economics: The Economic Impact of Companion Animals in the UK Research Report Sophie Hall, Luke Dolling, Katie Bristow, Ted Fuller and Daniel Mills School of Life Sciences, University of Lincoln, UK, Lincoln Business School, University of Lincoln, UK, Dogs for Good, Banbury, UK
- [16] <https://www.oecd.org/tax/revenue-statistics-united-kingdom.pdf>
- [17] Wild Caught Ornamental Fish: the trade, the benefits, the facts. Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association