

Animal Rescue in Ireland

A Survey



ANVIL IRELAND

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Giving Ireland's animals a voice

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Dedication

Dedicated to those involved in the rescue and rehoming of 'unwanted' animals in Ireland.



The greatness of a nation and its' moral progress can be judged by the way its' animals are treated ~ Mahatma Gandhi

Foreword

ANVIL was established in response to, what many people felt, was an absence of representation of animals, small rescues, and individuals involved in animal rescue and welfare. Our mission is, to raise awareness of the problems at both a public and government level. An important aspect of our work is, to encourage public debate on the present status of all animals, (in particular companion animals) and the questioning of legislation and practices that fail to address their needs, or prevent their suffering.

The organisation intends to, examine the political and legislative system, establish where reform is needed, and push for this reform. We are building a network of compassionate and conscientious citizens who are committed to making animal welfare a social and political issue.

ANVIL Ireland is completely independent and is not a vehicle for any one welfare or interest group, and is an all Ireland organisation. Membership is open to anyone who is interested in achieving positive change for all animals using the democratic process. As a result, our supporters have a wide spectrum of views and expertise which may be called on. The face of animal welfare is changing in Ireland, and ANVIL is an example of this change.

The principle objectives of ANVIL Ireland:

- To Research the existing legislation and structures dealing with companion animals, identify any shortcomings and make recommendations for improvement.
- Carry out studies, make submissions based on our findings, and identify where further information or research is required.
- Raise awareness of the problems faced by animals and rescue groups, and make representations to Government on their behalf.
- Generate public and Government debate on animal welfare issues.
- Make available our information and research to Politicians, others involved in animal welfare and protection, and the public, to enable and improve informed debate.

Summary

- Average rescue is rescuing approx 250 animals per year
- Average rescue is operating for approx 10 years
- Rescues are well distributed throughout the 32 counties of Ireland
- 9% of rescues specialise in a specific breed
- 25% of rescues exclude a specific breed
- More than three quarters of participating rescues are registered (or pending) charities
- 83% are not affiliated to the ISPCA
- 100% say they carry out home checks
- Majority of rescue carried out by volunteers, most are part time
- Public donations account for 48% of funding to rescue groups
- Approx 25,000 animals are rescued by independent animal welfare groups every year in Ireland
- 54% of animals coming into rescue are dogs, 35% are cats
- 63% of animals rescued are homed in Ireland, 37% are homed abroad
- Some rescues rehome 100% of their animals abroad
- 66% of animals come into rescue from members of the public
- 64% of people want to rehome their animal due to move from house to apartment, 36% because dog is too big
- Veterinary bills account for more than half of outgoings by rescues
- 67% of people involved in animal rescue are guardedly optimistic

Methodology

Anvil wanted to understand the state of animal rescue in Ireland and asked some of the most representative animal rescues in Ireland to answer a number of questions about the state of animal rescue in Ireland.

Questions focused on size of the rescue, numbers and type of animals rescued, costs involved, sources of funding, reasons for surrendering animals and methods to reduce the number of abandoned animals in this country.

Anvil prepared a questionnaire and animal rescues and individuals downloaded the forms or received them by post. The questionnaires were filled in and returned during the months of May and June 2007. The data was analysed in August/September and presented at the Anvil conference in September

This report does not pretend to be an exhaustive study but seeks to present an overview of a fragmented and under-documented sector.

If the participating animal rescues are representative of the wider animal rescue universe in Ireland, then these findings are also representative and can be confidently extrapolated.

Representation

Sources

In total 20 animal rescues and individuals completed the questionnaires. Not all participants answered all questions. All findings are based exclusively on their replies. These rescues and individuals had rescued more than 5,000 animals in 2006

Anvil Ireland is very grateful to everybody who helped with this research. This report will be posted on the Anvil website and emailed to each participant and anyone else who requests a copy.

Maria Clarke,

On behalf of ANVIL Ireland, March, 2008

This survey is divided into four parts:

Section 1) Profile of Rescues

- 1.1 the size
- 1.2 years in operation
- 1.3 location
- 1.4 policies (specialisation/breed exclusion)
- 1.5 status
- 1.6 home-checks/follow-up
- 1.7 staff/workers
- 1.8 funding

Section 2) Animals Rescued

- 2.1 numbers of animals rescued
- 2.2 numbers of rescues in Ireland
- 2.3 types of animals rescued
- 2.4 destination of animals

Section 3) Source of Animals

- 3.1 supply of animals
- 3.2 where are they coming from?
- 3.3 reasons for surrendering
- 3.4 costs of rescue/re-homing these animals

Section 4) The Future of Animal Rescue

- 4.1 Variation in number of animals rescued, 2005/2006
- 4.2 Optimism or pessimism?
- 4.3 Ideas for improvements

Section 1: Profile of Rescues

1.1 Size of rescue

The average rescue is rescuing approx 250 animals per year

Approximately 40% of the rescues which answered are taking in more than 300 animals each per year.

The minority (fewer than 10%) which are rescuing fewer than 60 animals each per year are typically individuals who are doing what they can (feral cats, taking from the pound, greyhounds)

Table 1: Size (by number of animals rescued)

Large sized rescues	38%
Medium sized rescues	54%
Small sized rescues	8%

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

Table 2: Distribution of participating rescues by number of animals rescued

Definition of Large	301-700
Definition of Medium	65-300
Definition of Small	Up to 64

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

1.2 Years in operation

How long have these rescues been in operation?

The average Irish animal rescue is long established, operating for approx 10 years.

The typical rescue has been operating for approximately a decade. It has experience and expertise, can see patterns emerging and has an overview of the sector.

In contrast, the most recent arrival had been in operation for just 3 months. The newer arrivals were typically individuals who have taken action to help specific cases – such as feral cats or abandoned greyhounds.

Table 4: Animal rescues by years in operation

Average Number of Years in Operation
9 years

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

1.3 Location of rescues in Ireland

Rescues are well distributed throughout the 32 counties of Ireland

Munster and Leinster account for half of the sample and Connacht and Ulster the other half.

Table 3: Location of Animal Rescues by Province

Province	%
Connacht	33%
Munster	25%
Leinster	25%
Ulster	17%

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

1.4 Policies - Specialisation of specific dog breeds?

Most rescues take in all types of dogs

Most Irish animal rescues take all type of dogs. Fewer than 1 in 10 specialises in a specific breed (eg, greyhounds)

Table 6: breed specialisation

General Rescue (No breed specialisation)	91%
Specialise in a Specific Breed	9%

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

Most (75%) rescues do not exclude a particular breed. Those who exclude bull breeds do so for very specific reasons. Rescues do not have the space required to keep them or feel that they cannot re-home these dogs.

Rescues who exclude specific breeds

Excluded a Specific Breed	25%
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(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

What animal rescues say:

“Pitbulls, as we anticipate a ban similar to GB and do not intend to become a dumping ground, as we already find it impossible to rehome them. We were sending them to Sweden but have been advised they cannot accept any more at present”

“Pit bull terriers. Afraid of being sued if dogs are aggressive”

“Too hard to home. We are not in a good area to be handing out these dogs. Also attracts undesirables to shelter”

1.5 Status of rescues

What is the legal status of these rescues?

Animal Rescues by their Status - (Registered Charity – Limited Company)

More than three quarters of participating rescues are registered charities

All rescues are registered (or pending registration) charities. A minority is affiliated to the ISPCA. (Note: Individuals are excluded)

Registered (or pending) Charity	77%
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(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

Table 5: Animal Rescues Affiliated to the ISPCA

Affiliated to ISPCA	17%
Not Affiliated to ISPCA	58%
Other	25%

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

1.6 Do animal rescues conduct home checks?

All rescues maintain they conduct home checks. However, the exact definition of a “home check” varies from rescue to rescue. Follow up is probably a better description. It is obvious that not all rescues have the time or labour required to conduct home-checks. Many are run on a shoe-string and do not have a person available or a budget for transport.

Do Home Checks	100%
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(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

What animal rescues say:

“I will not give anyone an animal unless I am satisfied that the cat or kitten is going to be part of the new family. All the cats and kittens go to their new homes with an adoption form of which I keep a copy with all contact details on it”

“Once the cat or kitten is adopted I do receive feed back on 90% through the post, text message and e-mail”

1.7 Staff/workers

Who is rescuing animals in Ireland?

Voluntary workers are responsible for animal rescue in Ireland. Most are part-time volunteers with a minority being full-time voluntary workers. A tiny percentage are paid for their work. Fewer than one fifth have paid workers.

The animal rescues categorise their workers by type, including core workers, committee members, fund-raisers, dog walkers, etc...

Categories of Workers

Core Workers
Committee Members
Fund raisers
Part time dog walkers
Fosterers

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

There is an average of 8 workers per rescue. But this average varies from 1 to 25 for our sample

What animal rescues say:

“10 volunteers are the main core, assisted by members occasionally and mainly for fundraising purposes” (rescued 400-plus animals)

“One full time volunteer and 7 part-time volunteers! (170-plus animals)

“There are about 6 people on the committee who volunteer regularly, and about 10-20 others who volunteer infrequently for fundraisers and such like. We have about 2-4 regular fosterers. We have no paid staff at all”.

“ A small part-time effort by myself, my wife and a few people who help in a variety of ways”

“One member does all the homing, vets visits, phone calls, home checks,. Three people who foster. One member there in name only” (rescued 100-plus animals)

1.8 Funding

How animal rescues are funded.

Public donations account for almost half of all rescues' income. Government grants make up almost another third. Uncertainty and lack of transparency associated with state aid cause great frustration to rescues. On the other hand, fundraising requires time and dedicated fund-raisers. There is also obviously a huge amount of self-funding.

Table 7: Source of funding

Public Donations	48%
Government grants	28%
Rehoming Fees	3%

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

As usual, there is great disparity between the individual rescues.

Table 8: Percentage breakdown of funding

Public donations vary from	5-87%
Rehoming fees vary from	5-95%
Government grants varies from	3-65%

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

What animal rescues say:

“Major concern is uncertainty and late notice of ex-gratia grant. Failure to receive grant would mean immediate closure to avoid running up debts”

“Grant for 07 was zero. This was successfully appealed against and we got Euro20,000 for 2007 which was Euro5,000 less than 2006. Reason: Politics” (Budget of over Euro200,000)

“Department grant increased by €1000. Our own earnings made up the shortfall in income”

“Government grant went down by a Euro1,000”

“Own income” “Self funding” “I operate on a wing and a prayer”

“I run it myself, partially funding it myself and get donations and payment when I can”

Word of Warning!

“ I think too many rescues are relying on government grant which can stop at any time and no doubt will when things get tough”

Section 2: Animals Rescued

2.1 Number of animals rescued in 2006

How many animals were rescued in 2006?

More than 5,000 animals rescued by this small sample alone in Ireland in 2006

Average number of animals rescued by each rescue in 2006

Average Number of Animals Rescued per Rescue	251
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(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

Differences in numbers rescued by participants

Lowest number rescued	12
Highest number rescued	691

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

2.2 How many animal rescues exist in Ireland?

**3-4 rescues are operating within a 50km radius in the country
Each rescue can identify 3 individuals involved in animal rescue**

Just under half the sample could name individuals living within a 50km radius who are involved in animal rescue. An average of 3 individuals were named by each participant

Named Individuals Involved in Animal Rescue	42%
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(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

More than 80% of the sample could name other rescue organisations within a 50km radius. An average of 3 rescues were named by each participant

Named Other Rescues	83%
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(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

2.3 What types of animals are being rescued in Ireland every year?

Table 9: Breakout of Animals Rescued

Dogs	54%
Cats	35%
“Smallies” & Others	10%

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

Half of all rescued animals are dogs and more than a third are cats.

Others include birds, fowl, wildlife, goldfish, foxes, hedgehogs, parrots, horses, goats....

2.4 What happens to these animals?

Over a half of the animals are re-homed in Ireland and the remainder are re-homed outside the country. There are too many domestic animals being produced in Ireland and this excess must be exported (re-homed elsewhere).

6 out 10 stay in Ireland

4 out of 10 go abroad

Table 10: destination of rescued animals

Ireland	63%
Abroad	37%

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

There is a great variation between rescues. Some re-home each and every animal in Ireland because it is their policy while others re-home 99% abroad.

Highest percentage rehomed in Ireland	100 %
Lowest percentage rehomed in Ireland	1%

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

The UK is the primary destination, used by all rescues which rehome abroad, followed by another 3 northern European countries.

Some rescues note that they only send specific breeds to specialised rescues abroad (eg, lurchers, Australian cattle dogs) in the UK or elsewhere

Table 11: Destination of animals outside Ireland

UK	100 %
Sweden Germany Switzerland	45%

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

What animal rescues say:

“Without the help from supporting UK organisations we would be paralysed. There are simply not enough homes in Ireland for the amount of animal presented to us” (rescued 500-plus animals)

“We can only re-home 2-3 dogs in Ireland”

“Our rescue does not transport dogs outside Ireland”

Section 3) Source of Animals

3.1 Supply of animals

Where are these animals coming from?

Table 12: Sources of animals

Members of the Public	66%
Vets -Rescues- Pounds	20%
“Other”	14%

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

Members of the public account for two thirds of all animals in the rescues according to the sample. The remainder of the animals comes from vets, other rescues and pounds.

“Other” is split between feral cats and cruelty cases or abandoned animals

What animal rescues say:

“Animals that have been seized or surrendered as a result of cruelty/neglect investigation” (400-plus animals)

“Cruelty cases and abandonment are the main sources” (400-plus animals)

“Abandoned/dumped animals” (300-plus animals)

“Feral cats which we take in where otherwise they would be destroyed”

As always, “average” masks a huge disparity in numbers. Some rescues receive 100% of animals from members of the public, while in others that drops to a third.

Highest percentage from public	100 %
Lowest percentage from public	30%

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

3.2 Reasons for surrendering

Why do people surrender or abandon their animals?

Reasons for Surrendering Animals:

A wide range (14 in total) of reasons are proffered for those animals which are surrendered. The most common reason appears to be that people are moving house. This was given by almost two thirds of the sample.

Another big problem is that people seem unable to visualise the size of the adult dog. The animal becomes too big and is surrendered.

Problems associated with lack of training appears to be a big issue

Table 13: Reasons for surrendering animals

Moving house (to an apartment)	64%
Dog is too big	36%
Death/hospitalisation of owner	14%

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

Multiple answers possible

Other reasons include:

- Don't want the dog
- Dog snapping at children
- Dog untrained and barks.
- Dog locked outside all day. Neighbours complain.
- Dog wanders
- Dog too something (too big, wild, too old, too....)
- Medical (asthma, allergies) problems

3.3 What is being spent by animal rescues?

Table 14: percentage spend for rescues

< €50,000	81 %
€200-250,000	18%

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

Most of the rescues spend less than €50,000 a year (in 2006). This is because few (20%) have any paid employees.

The single most important expense for each rescue is veterinary costs. Veterinary bills account for more than half our sample's expenditure. Average masks huge disparity for individual rescues

Vet	53%
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(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

Highest vet spend	85%
Lowest vet spend	10%

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

Other costs include fees of all types, kenneling and utilities. Transport, which many rescues admit they finance themselves, is also highlighted.

Other Main Expenses

Fees (Licenses. Release)
Kenneling & Maintenance
Utilities
Labour (wages)
Transport (diesel)

What animal rescues say:

“In 2006 transport fuel for almost 2,000 miles transport assistance” (an individual)

“Diesel to collect animals”

Section 4: Is the situation improving or dis-improving

4.1 Variation in number of animals rescued 2006/2005

Just over half (58%) the sample report an increase in the animals rescued in 2006 compared to 2005. The average increase is of 70% in the number of animals rescued

At first glance, the increase in surrendered animals contradicts the optimism expressed by a majority of the sample. At the very minimum, there is greater awareness of the problem and willingness to work together.

4.2 Optimistic or pessimistic?

Table 15: Optimism or Pessimism of Rescues

Optimistic	67%
Pessimistic	25%
Don't know	8%

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)

The optimists outnumber the pessimists. But it is qualified optimism, even the optimists are guarded about future improvements.

- Increased awareness of animal welfare. People are more conscious of animal welfare and less tolerant of cruelty or neglect. More than half the sample report that more people are rescuing animals than before.
- Increased media coverage (which also leads to higher donations) creates higher public expectations of animal rescue services.
- Rescues to a certain extent are victims of their own success. Well known or better known rescues are overwhelmed with animals.
- Greater awareness of neutering. More animals coming in neutered
- Willingness of welfare groups to work together. The recognition that animal rescues are only dealing with the symptoms of the problems in Ireland.
Legislation is required
- Anvil is welcomed by many.

Reasons for pessimism need little elaboration

- People are more cruel
- Too many/Uncontrolled breeders
- Throw away culture

What animal rescues say:

“Dogs and cats are often tied to my gate. Private people, vets and Gardai phone me to take in dogs/cats”

“We are getting better known and are being overwhelmed. We are turning 90% of callers away.

“Through neutering/spaying we definitely had less unwanted litters Dec 06/Jan 07 but a tremendous increase in abandonment!.

“Reactive not proactive. Without a means of population control the abuse and neglect of animals will continue. Unlimited supply leads to a lack of appreciation and respect and a "throwaway" culture. Scarcity brings value, value brings respect”

“Everyone is breeding dogs trying to make a quick buck. Rescue centres are cleaning up the mucky end of dog breeding”

“We simply have no spaces and not enough funding”

“Public awareness of Public Pound Policy has led to big increase in dumping at or near shelter, and an increase in surrender requests”

“We have to refuse a lot of animals due to lack of fosterers so these are going to the dog warden and therefore to the pound. I think the situation and awareness of the problems are improving in Ireland, but we are still many many years behind the UK. The government doesn't seem to want to know at all, and until they play their part via regulation and enforcement there is very little that rescues can achieve”

4.3 What can done to improve animal welfare in Ireland?

There was complete and total unanimity by all participating rescues when it comes to improving animal welfare. They identify 4 measures to reduce the excess production of cats and dogs and to improve animal welfare in Ireland.

These measures are currently operating in any number of European countries so the wheel does not have to be re-invented in Ireland.

Table 16: Measures to Improve Animal Welfare

Neutering	31%
Public Education and Awareness	28%
Enforcement of Licensing Legislation	22%
Micro-chipping	17%

(Source: Animal Rescue Ireland 2006 - Anvil Ireland)
(Multiple answers possible)

Thank you to everyone who helped.

It is intended to repeat this survey at the end of 2007. We ask all “larger” rescues (especially 300 plus animals) to help with their knowledge.

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