

Dog Pounds in Northern Ireland

A Report



ANVIL IRELAND

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Giving Ireland's animals a voice

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Dedication and Acknowledgements

This report is dedicated to the many thousands of dogs who have died in Northern Ireland's dog pounds; as well as the small band of committed people who strive to change the system that oversees this wanton carnage.

ANVIL Ireland wishes to thank Rosemary Glendenning, who undertook the dog pound survey, and Mel Fraser and Mike Rendle from the Animal Welfare Federation of Northern Ireland for their help and support.

“The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them, that's the essence of inhumanity” ~ George Bernard Shaw

Foreword

ANVIL (Animals Need a Voice In Legislation) Ireland is a non government organisation, established to raise the profile of animals in both the public and political arena, thus ensuring adequate legislation for their protection. ANVIL does not support any one political party nor is it a vehicle for any one welfare or interest group.

The organisation uses an all Ireland approach as we believe the issues surrounding animals and their welfare are common to both jurisdictions, as are the problems with public and government attitudes.

Part of our remit is to research the legislation and the institutions affecting animals and produce research and proposals for improving the lot of animals on the island as a whole. ANVIL also offers representation to independent rescue and welfare groups who are working tirelessly to tackle the problems created by the overproduction, abandonment and neglect that is commonplace in our society.

Miriam Anderson, MSc, MAMLS

On behalf of ANVIL Ireland



Introduction

Ireland has long been hailed as a nation of animal lovers, and dog lovers in particular. The reality however belies this notion. Despite the fact that we, as a people, have become more educated, sophisticated, and wealthy, the plight of animals has not improved. The statistics from our dog pounds make for sobering reading and raise questions about the Irish attitude to animals.

In the context of the UK, Northern Ireland has the highest destruction rates while Ireland, north, and south, has one of the highest per capita destruction figures for pound dogs in Europe. The Irish attitude to animal welfare is at best antiquated and outdated; at worst, it is callous and uncaring. It is an issue that needs to be addressed not just on animal welfare grounds but also because it reflects badly on our society. In the words of Mahatma Ghandi, ***“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated”***.

This report contains information on the stray and unwanted dogs in Northern Ireland including their fate. The figures for the various district councils are compared within the context of the population in each area. The report also addresses the enforcement of the legislation, again in the context of population. In addition to the statistics for pound dogs, the results of a dog pound survey undertaken by the Animal Welfare Federation of Northern Ireland are included.

It is hoped that this research will go some way towards addressing the issues surrounding the overproduction, neglect, and abandonment which saw the needless deaths of 3,961 mainly healthy dogs in Northern Ireland in 2006. It will also highlight the lack of standardisation of the dog pound system across the province.



Background

The last few decades have seen an increase in research into the psychology and physiology of companion animals which has increased our knowledge and understanding of their needs. It is largely accepted that the five freedoms form an ethical framework for determining animal welfare. In summary these are:

- Freedom from hunger and thirst
- Freedom from discomfort
- Freedom from pain, injury and disease
- Freedom from fear and distress
- Freedom to express normal behaviour

The main animal welfare legislation in Northern Ireland is the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland), 1972. The explanatory paragraph of which, states;

“An act to make provision with respect to the welfare of livestock on agricultural land; to regulate the keeping of petshops, animal boarding, riding and zoological establishments; and to consolidate with amendments certain enactments relating to the protection of animals from unnecessary suffering and for purposes connected therewith.”

The “protection of animals from unnecessary suffering” suggests all animals, including pound dogs, are included. As dog pounds are establishments where dogs are held and either reunited, rehomed or destroyed, one would assume they should be subject to the same requirements and controls as other similar establishments like boarding kennels. Worryingly, dog pounds in Northern Ireland are not subject to the same controls as the establishments mentioned in the Act.

Such establishments are subject to the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. Under section 8 of this Act, licences may be granted with regard to the following:

- (a) The qualification and experience of the applicant and of the staff, if any, employed.
- (b) The system of management
- (c) The suitability of the accommodation, taking account of the number of animals and the purpose for which it is required, and the arrangement for the adequate exercise, protection and welfare of the animals.
- (d) The requirements of any regulation made under section 11

These conditions of suitability could, and indeed should, be applied to dog pounds especially as some dog pounds are not run by the District Councils themselves, but by other providers under contract to the Councils. The fact that dog pounds are operated by, or on behalf of, District Councils does not guarantee the standards of these facilities, nor the welfare of the dogs held within them.

In the best interest of dogs held in pounds, as well as public accountability, dog pounds should be subject to the same legislation and regulations as those establishments outlined in the 1972 legislation.

The legislation governing dogs in Northern Ireland is The Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order, 1983 and The Dangerous Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order, 1991. Both of these deal with control of dogs and are not welfare based. The Dogs Order does state in paragraph 5:

“The district council detaining a dog under this Article-

- (a) Shall cause the dog to be properly fed and maintained; and
- (b) Shall arrange for the provision of such veterinary treatment (including humane destruction) as it considers necessary.

The dogs order also allows councils to sell dogs or destroy them “in a manner as to cause as little pain as possible”.

The control of dogs in any society is necessary and desirable and the community are entitled to be protected from uncontrolled animals. We must however, be careful that the emphasis, responsibility, and penalty is not shouldered entirely by the dogs themselves, who are after all, at the mercy of their owners and society at large. If the animals themselves continue to pay the price of human irresponsibility, while the owners, who are the cause of the problem, are not accountable, we will never be able to improve the situation as it exists at present.

Dog control figures

The dog control figures for Northern Ireland are compiled by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) based on returns from the District Councils. In isolation, these figures mean very little and in order to properly compare the categories we have recorded the figures in the context of the population in each council area. This gives a better idea of exactly what is going on in individual areas with regard to the numbers of stray and unwanted dogs, their fate, and the enforcement of the legislation.

1. Stray dogs.

1.1 Stray dogs, total impounded, and destroyed

Table 1 outlines the number of stray dogs impounded in the province in 2005 and 2006, as well as those destroyed. In 2006 there were 8,842 stray dogs impounded compared with 8,918 in 2005. This represents a less than 1% decrease; which, in light of the sustained attempts by rescue groups in Northern Ireland to promote neutering and spaying, is very disappointing.

The number of dogs destroyed in 2006 is reported as 2,459 this is 695 less than the figure reported in 2005. The increase in dogs reclaimed by their owners is only up 52 in 2006 although the figure for dogs sold or rehomed to the public is up by 188 on 2005. This seems like an improvement until you consider that the number of stray dogs in the strays 'other' column (i.e. strays released to rescue groups), is 835. As there was no breakdown of the 'other' column for 2005, we cannot compare the two years, however, it would appear that a major factor in the decrease in Northern Ireland's destruction figure for stray dogs in 2006 is down to the effort of rescue groups.



Table 1: Stray dogs impounded and destroyed in NI, 2005-2006



Council	Stray dogs impounded 05	Stray dogs impounded 06	Stray dogs PTS 05	Stray dogs PTS 06	% Strays PTS 05	% Strays PTS 06	Stray dogs, 'other' 2006
Antrim	295	320	78	79	26	25	104
Ards	246	276	32	33	13	12	0
Armagh	607	704	177	169	29	24	149
Ballymena	278	206	91	67	33	33	2
Ballymoney	117	112	21	19	18	17	12
Banbridge	142	179	47	53	33	30	43
Belfast	885	1026	131	163	15	16	14
Carrickfergus	183	195	23	8	13	4	1
Castlereagh	176	208	22	21	13	10	0
Coleraine	290	232	57	59	20	25	6
Cookstown	148	163	48	31	32	19	0
Craigavon	852	881	206	66	24	8	234
Derry	376	450	287	331	76	74	0
Down	751	837	260	171	35	20	3
Dungannon	301	292	231	87	77	30	91
Fermanagh	234	205	167	142	71	69	5
Larne	160	141	38	20	24	14	15
Limavady	115	112	71	69	62	62	0
Lisburn	470	419	70	80	15	19	76
Magherafelt	125	139	40	35	32	25	34
Moyle	109	74	43	28	39	38	19
Newry	786	703	336	358	43	51	3
Newtownabbey	328	393	35	39	11	10	23
North Down	119	113	21	15	18	13	1
Omagh	604	243	497	187	82	77	0
Strabane	221	219	125	129	57	59	0
Total	8918	8842	3154	2459	35	28	835

Table 2: Discrepancies in the figures for stray dogs impounded, and the number accounted for in NI, 2006



Council	Total Stray dogs declared '06	Stray dogs PTS '06	Stray dogs sold '06	Stray dogs reclaimed '06	Stray dogs (Other)* '06*	Total Stray dogs accounted for '06
Down	837	171	469	105	3	748
Moyle	74	28	16	21	19	84
Newry	703	358	253	91	3	705
North Down	113	15	79	10	1	105
Totals	1727	572	817	227	26	1642

*Other refers to dogs released to rescue groups

1.2 Discrepancies in figures for stray dogs, impounded, and destroyed

Table 2 highlights the discrepancies found in the reported figures for stray dogs in 2006. Some councils have failed to account for all the stray dogs they declared while others have accounted for more dogs than they impounded! This may just be clerical error on the part of the personnel making the returns but it is worrying that it was not highlighted or corrected before the figures were released.

If 15% of the returns for stray dogs are inaccurate, it raises questions as to the records kept and the method of making returns. It also raises questions as to the checking of these figures if these discrepancies were not queried.

1.3 Total stray dogs per thousand of population

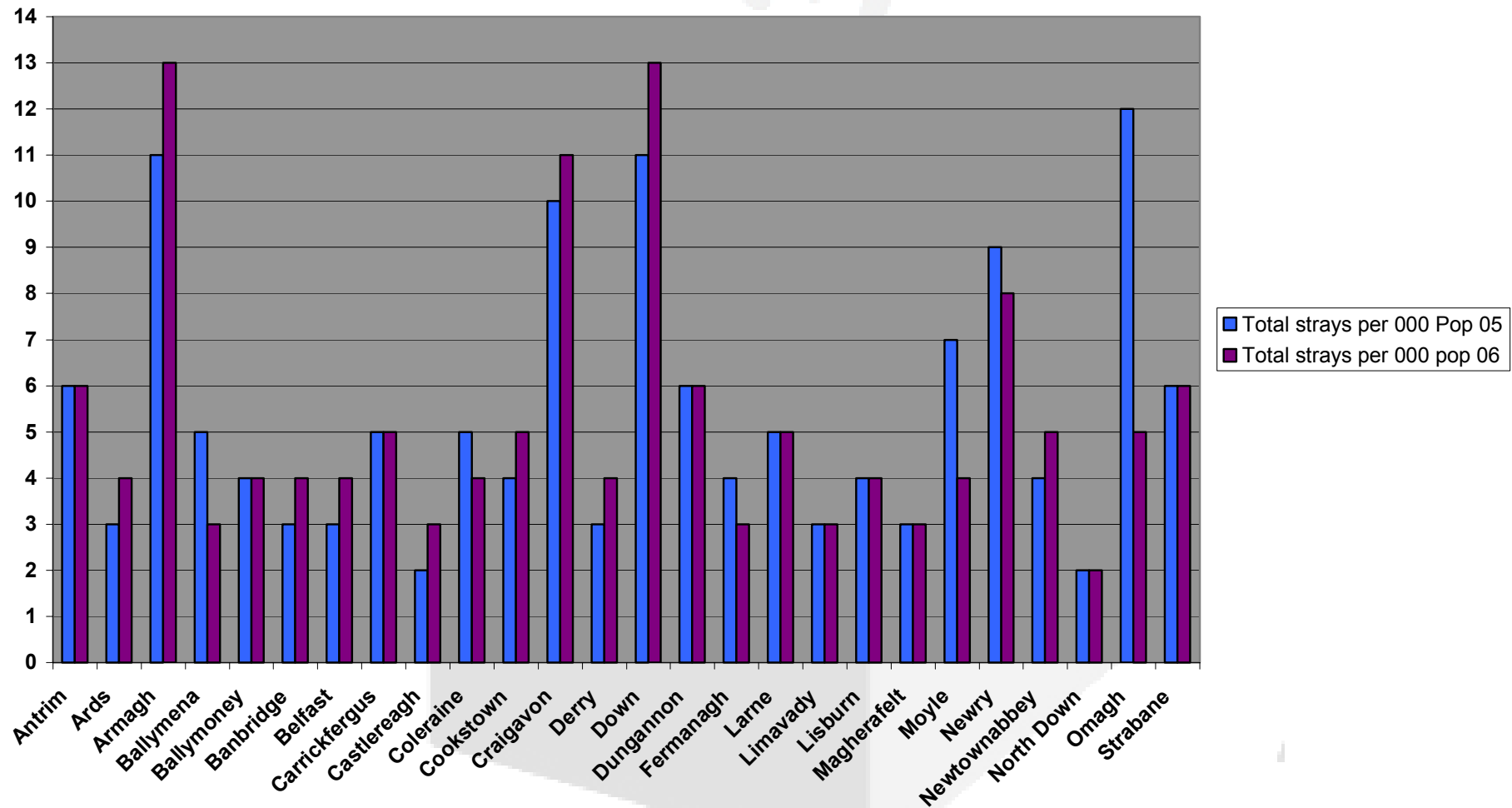
Graph 1 illustrates the number of stray dogs expressed per thousand of population within each district council area. This puts the numbers into some sort of perspective and makes it easier to see how the various areas compare. The most immediate observation is the high peaks in some areas. The average number of total dogs per thousand of population for the province as a whole for 2005 and 2006 is 5. While some areas are as low as 2, others are as high as 13, more than twice the average.

The main black spots are, Armagh, Craigavon, Down, and Omagh. Another interesting feature is the difference between the totals declared by Omagh in 2005 and 2006. In one year the total number of strays per thousand of population, decreased from 12 to 5.

Graph 1: Total stray dogs per thousand of population, NI, 2005-2006



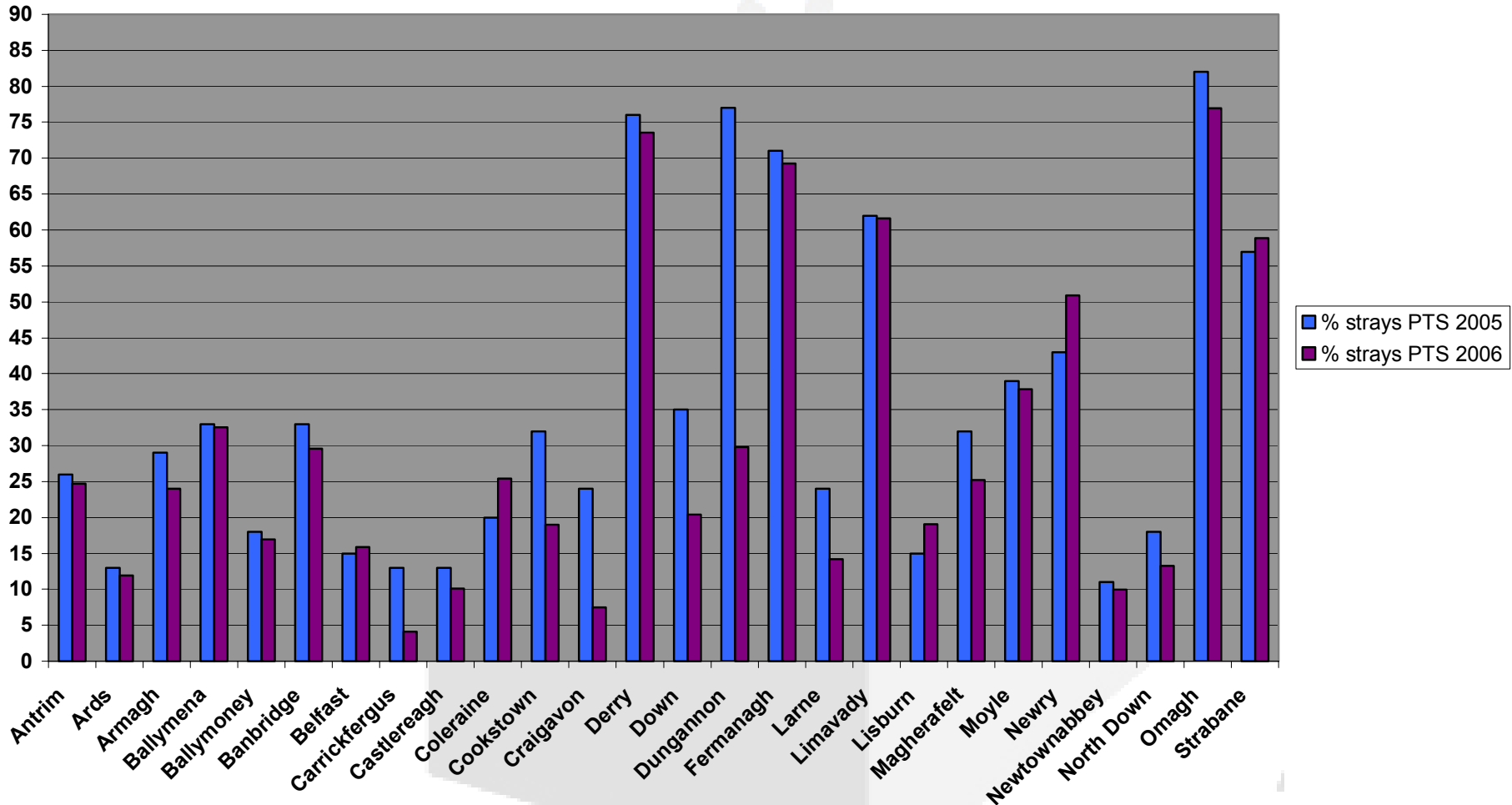
Total stray dogs per thousand of population, NI, 2005-2006



Graph 2: Percentage stray dogs destroyed, NI, 2005-2006



Percentage stray dogs destroyed, NI, 2005-2006



1.4 Percentage of stray dogs destroyed, NI, 2005-2006

Graph 2, illustrates the percentage of stray dogs destroyed in 2005 and 2006. The peaks and troughs in this graph points to a total lack of standardisation between local authorities. The worst areas in terms of destruction of stray dogs are Derry, Fermanagh, Limavady, Newry, Omagh, and Strabane. Dungannon had one of the highest destruction rates in 2005 at 70% but this was reduced to 30% in 2006.

Despite having a reduction in the number of strays from 604 in 2005, to 243 in 2006, the destruction rate in Omagh remained almost the same (82% in 2005, 77% in 2006). Table 3 is a list of the worst councils in terms of destruction of stray dogs in 2006.

Table 3: League table for the destruction of stray dogs, NI, 2006



Position	District council	Percentage stray dogs destroyed, 2006
1	Omagh	77
2	Derry	74
3	Fermanagh	69
4	Limavady	62
5	Strabane	59
6	Newry	51
7	Moyle	38

2. Unwanted dogs.

2.1 Unwanted dogs, total impounded, destroyed, sold, and released to rescue groups

Table 5 shows the number of unwanted dogs impounded in 2005 and 2006, as well as those destroyed. The increase in the number of unwanted dogs impounded between 2005 and 2006 represents a 16% increase and suggests the issues of overproduction of dogs and the irresponsibility of owners are not improving.

We cannot compare the numbers of unwanted dogs that were released to rescue (the 'other' column) between these two years as in 2005 this information was not given. In 2006, 374 of the unwanted dogs were rescued. However, almost 50% of all unwanted dogs were destroyed. A list of the councils with the highest destruction rates for unwanted dogs in 2006 is outlined in table 4.

The unwanted dogs are not broken down into breeds or reasons as to why they may no longer be wanted by their owners and in the absence of this information it is difficult to establish the reasons for such high numbers of dogs being surrendered by their owners.

Table 4: League table for the destruction of unwanted dogs, NI, 2006



Position	District council	Percentage stray dogs destroyed, 2006
1	Omagh	*113
2	Larne	100
3	Limavady	90
4	Fermanagh	87
5	Derry	79
6	Ballymena	74
7	Newry	67
8	Magherafelt	62
9	Strabane	61
10	Lisburn	57
11	Coleraine	53

*this percentage of 113 is due to discrepancies in the figures for Omagh

Table 5: Unwanted dogs impounded, rehomed to rescue, and destroyed in NI, 2006



Council	Unwanted Dogs impounded 2005	Unwanted dogs impounded 2006	Unwanted dogs PTS 2006	% Unwanted dogs PTS 2006	Unwanted dogs sold 2006	% Unwanted dogs sold 2006	Unwanted dogs (Other) 2006*	% Unwanted dogs (Other) 2006*
Antrim	33	31	7	23	9	29	15	48
Ards	43	46	20	43	26	57	0	0
Armagh	222	304	93	31	110	33	101	33
Ballymena	91	47	35	74	6	13	3	6
Ballymoney	5	6	2	33	2	33	2	33
Banbridge	47	46	23	50	12	26	11	24
Belfast	437	513	200	39	303	59	10	2
Carrickfergus	189	134	24	18	97	72	13	10
Castlereagh	43	41	6	15	10	24	11	27
Coleraine	70	92	49	53	43	47	0	0
Cookstown	194	128	35	27	110	86	13	10
Craigavon	71	79	7	9	55	70	17	22
Derry	70	263	209	79	54	79	0	0
Down	62	135	54	40	75	56	6	4
Dungannon	59	129	33	26	22	17	74	57
Fermanagh	140	119	104	87	13	11	2	2
Larne	12	16	16	100	0	0	0	0
Limavady	75	89	80	90	9	10	0	0
Lisburn	203	210	119	57	39	19	62	30
Magherafelt	138	168	104	62	64	38	0	0
Moyle	21	27	4	15	9	33	5	19
Newry	70	110	74	67	36	33	0	0
Newtownabbey	150	187	54	29	107	57	26	14
North Down	32	20	0	0	9	45	3	15
Omagh	127	91	103	**113	10	11	0	0
Strabane	76	77	47	61	30	39	0	0
Totals/averages	2680	3108	1502	48	1260	41	374	12

*Other refers to dogs that are released to rescue groups **this percentage of 113 is due to a discrepancy in the figures for Omagh.

Table 6: Discrepancies in the figures for unwanted dogs impounded, rehomed to rescue, and destroyed in NI, 2006



Council	Total Unwanted dogs declared '06	Unwanted dogs PTS 06	Unwanted dogs sold 06	Unwanted dogs (Other) '06*	Total Unwanted dogs accounted for 06
Ballymena	47	35	6	3	44
Castlereagh	41	6	10	11	27
Cookstown	128	35	110	13	158
Lisburn	210	119	39	62	220
Moyle	27	4	9	5	18
North Down	20	0	9	3	12
Omagh	91	103	10	0	113
Totals	564	302	193	97	592

*Other refers to dogs released to rescue groups

2.2 Unwanted dogs, impounded, destroyed, sold, and released to rescue groups

Table 6 highlights the discrepancies found in the reported figures for unwanted dogs in Northern Ireland in 2006. As in the case of the stray dogs, some councils have declared more dogs than they have accounted for while others account for more than they have declared. This means 27% or almost one third of councils have errors in their returns for unwanted dogs.

Two districts, Moyle and North Down, have discrepancies in both the stray dog and unwanted dog returns.

2.3 Total unwanted dogs per ten thousand of population

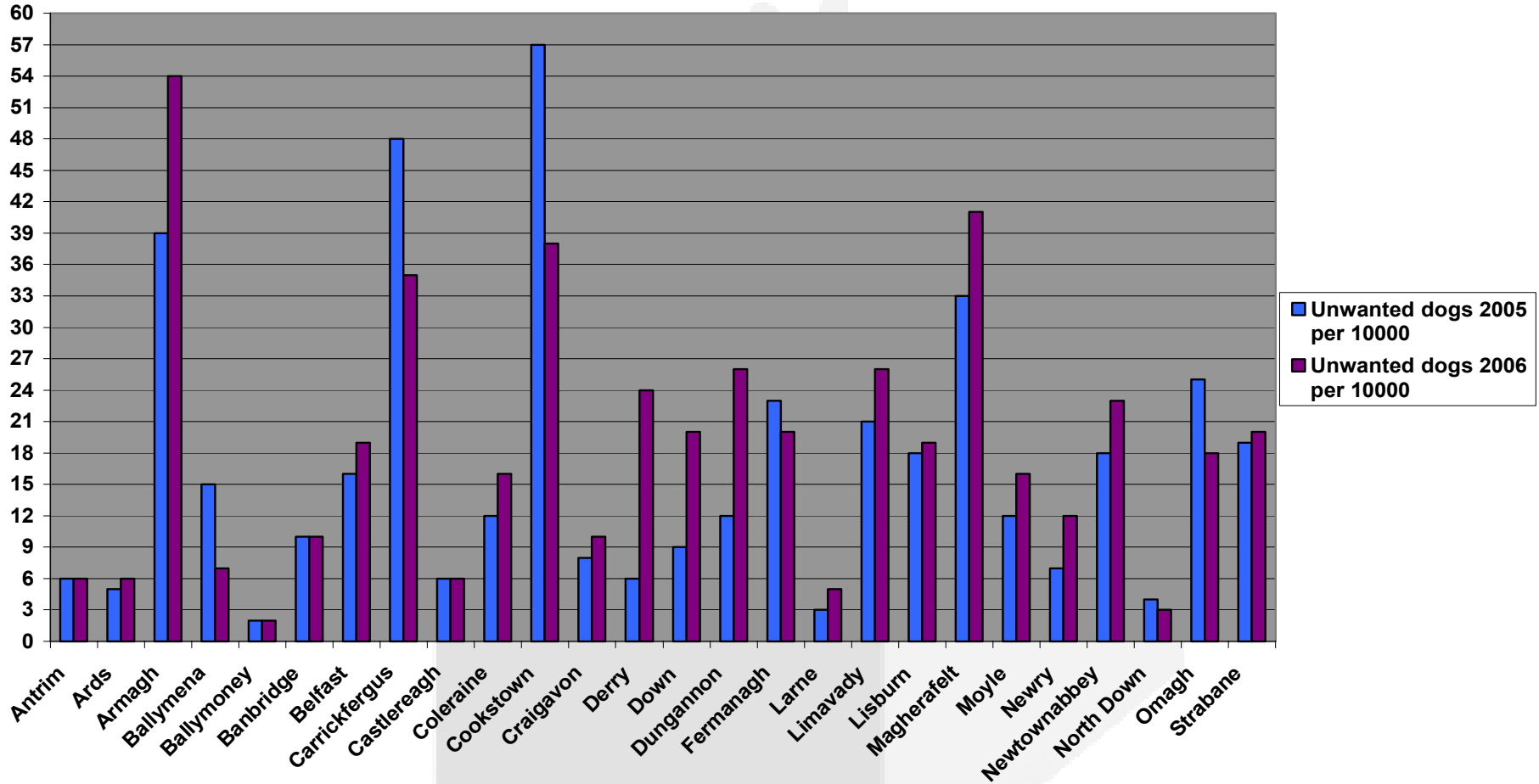
The total unwanted dogs in terms of population number is expressed per ten thousand of population in graph 3, otherwise the figures would be too small to illustrate them properly. Like the population graph for stray dogs, this graph also shows higher than expected peaks for some areas.

The average for unwanted dogs per ten thousand of population in 2005 was 15. This figure rose to 18 in 2006. The black spots in this category include Armagh, Carrickfergus, Cookstown, and Magherafelt, all of whom have at least double the average number.

Graph 3: Unwanted dogs per ten thousand of population, NI, 2005-2006



Unwanted dogs per 10,000 population, NI, 2005-2006



3. Stray and unwanted dogs.

3.1 Total stray and unwanted dogs impounded and destroyed in NI, 2005-2006

The total number of stray and unwanted dog impounded and destroyed in Northern Ireland in 2005 and 2006 are detailed in table 8. The total number and percentage destroyed for this category is not available for 2005 and therefore cannot be compared.

The overall increase in the total number of dogs entering pounds in Northern Ireland between 2005 and 2006 is 3%. As stated previously, this is very disappointing in view of the hard work being done on the ground by rescue and welfare groups. The worst pounds in terms destruction of stray and unwanted dogs in Northern Ireland for 2006 are listed in table 7.

Table 7: League table for the destruction of stray and unwanted dogs, NI, 2006



osition	District council	Percentage stray and unwanted dogs destroyed, 2006
1	Omagh	87
2	Derry	76
3	Fermanagh	76
4	Limavady	74
5	Strabane	59
6	Newry	53

3.2 Total stray and unwanted dogs per thousand of population in NI, 2005-2006

The total figures for unwanted and stray dogs per thousand of population are compared in graph 4. The average number for Northern Ireland is 7, however, some areas have more than twice this figure i.e. Armagh has 18 and Down has 15. One of the most surprising features of the graph is the dramatic fall in total numbers for Omagh between 2005 and 2006. There is a decrease from 15 dogs per thousand to 7 per thousand of population.

Table 8: Total stray and unwanted dogs impounded and destroyed in NI, 2005-2006



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Councils	Total stray +unwanted 05	Total stray +unwanted 06	Total stray + unwanted destroyed 06*	% stray and unwanted Destroyed 06**
Antrim	328	351	86	25
Ards	289	322	53	16
Armagh	829	1008	262	26
Ballymena	369	253	102	40
Ballymoney	122	118	21	18
Banbridge	189	225	76	34
Belfast	1322	1539	363	24
Carrickfergus	372	329	32	10
Castlereagh	219	249	27	11
Coleraine	360	324	108	33
Cookstown	342	291	66	23
Craigavon	923	960	73	8
Derry	446	713	540	76
Down	813	972	225	23
Dungannon	360	421	120	29
Fermanagh	374	324	246	76
Larne	172	157	36	23
Limavady	190	201	149	74
Lisburn	673	629	199	32
Magherafelt	263	307	139	45
Moyle	130	101	32	32
Newry	856	813	432	53
Newtownabbey	478	580	93	16
North Down	151	133	15	11
Omagh	731	334	290	87
Strabane	297	296	176	59
Totals	11598	11950	3961*	33**

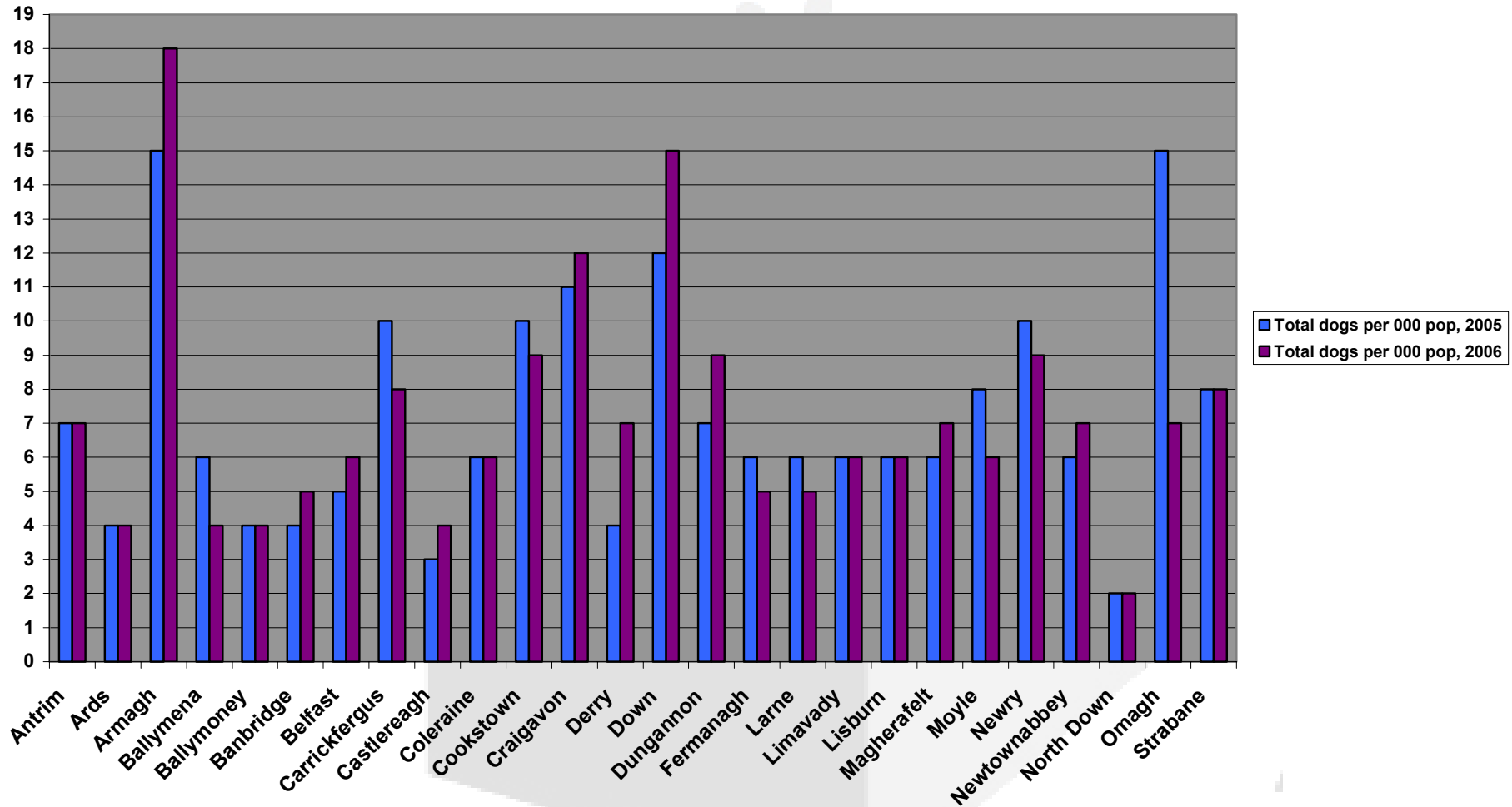
*This figure is not available for 2005

** This figure is not available for 2005

Graph 4: Total stray and unwanted dogs per thousand of population in NI, 2005-2006



Total stray and unwanted dogs per 000 pop NI, 2005-2006



4. Enforcement of legislation, NI, 2006

4.1 Enforcement of minor offences per ten thousand of population 2006

The enforcement of minor offences for all areas is highlighted in table 8. The figures are expressed per ten thousand of population. The variation in the number of penalties and warning letters again emphasises the stark differences between council areas. The formal cautions and successful prosecutions are miniscule. The reason for this may be that councils choose to warn, inform and educate the public, rather than pursuing people for relatively minor offences.

4.2 Enforcement of more serious offences per ten thousand of population 2006

The number of serious offences shown in table 9 is again, very varied. There appears to be little or no successful prosecutions, destruction orders, or penalties imposed for these offences. This gives cause for concern especially as 'more serious' offences include, attacks on people and livestock.

4.3 Number of dog licences per thousand of population 2006

In graph 5 the number of licences issued in each council area per thousand of population is shown. Once again, there is huge variation in the figures. The best area in terms of enforcement of the licensing laws is Ballymena, with 110 dog licences issued per thousand of population. The worst area is Derry where only 16 licences per thousand were issued.

When the number of licences issued is compared to the number of dogs impounded there is a similar pattern. Once again, Derry is the lowest with 2 licences issued per pound dog, while North Down was the highest with 43. Overall, the enforcement figures point to lack of standardisation between councils.

4.4 Enforcement of dangerous dogs legislation, NI, 2006

The information concerning enforcement of the dangerous dogs legislation in 2006 can be found in table 10. Of 198 'dangerous dogs' dealt with, only 16 prosecutions were taken and of these only 6 were successful and penalties were imposed in 5 cases.

Many areas dealt with no dangerous dogs while Belfast dealt with 105. Of these cases, 4 prosecutions were taken but none were reported as successful. These figures raise many questions. Are there actually more ‘dangerous’ dogs in Belfast or are there more dogs being identified as ‘dangerous’ when in fact they are not.

The following table shows the figures reported by Northern Ireland local authorities for dog attacks on people and for dangerous dog incidents investigated in each year from 2003 to 2006.



Year	Attacks on people	Dangerous dogs incidents investigated
2003	697	14
2004	783	13
2005	772	26
2006	764	198

There was a surge in the number of dangerous dog incidents investigated in 2006. This increase was largely accounted for by Belfast City Council, which recorded 105 (53%) of the total 198 incidents recorded province-wide. In each of the years 2003, 2004 and 2005, Belfast recorded 0 incidents. A number of other council areas reported substantial though somewhat less dramatic increases over previous years in 2006.

This indicates a change in approach to the enforcement of the legislation in 2006 or a sudden and dramatic increase in the number of so called ‘dangerous dogs’ being kept in Northern Ireland.

It has been suggested that enforcement of the legislation is almost impossible in some areas due to anti social behaviour, violence, and other social problems. This would not be an acceptable argument if the issue was to do with illegal drugs or firearms offences, neither is it acceptable in the context of dog control legislation. Either it is the law or it’s not.

In the absence of more information, it is impossible to guess the reason for the variation in enforcement of this legislation.



Table 8: Enforcement of ‘minor’ offences per 10,000 of population in NI, 2006



Council	Fixed penalty per 10,000 pop 2006	Warning letter per 10000 pop 2006	Formal Cautions per 10,000 pop 2006	Successful prosecutions per 10,000 pop 2006
Antrim	3	5	1	0
Ards	7	0	0	1
Armagh	1	1	0	0
Ballymena	12	31	0	1
Ballymoney	10.5	19	0	0
Banbridge	4	1	0	1
Belfast	15	0	0	1
Carrickfergus	3	24	1	0
Castlereagh	8	7	1	2
Coleraine	80	95	2	1
Cookstown	7	84	0	0
Craigavon	3	5	1	0
Derry	12	1	0	0
Down	2	4	0	1
Dungannon	6	11	0	0
Fermanagh	4	5	0	0
Larne	37	3	0	6
Limavady	5	36	0	1
Lisburn	4	23	1	0
Magherafelt	8	0	0	0
Moyle	9	0	0	0
Newry	2.5	0	0	0
Newtownabbey	14.5	6	1	3
North Down	19	9	1	0
Omagh	2	61	0	0
Strabane	7	10	0	0

Minor offences include No licence, straying, no keeper ID, fouling, and other.

Table 9: Enforcement of ‘more serious’ offences per 10,000 of population in NI, 2006



Council	More serious offences per 10,000 pop 2006	Successful prosecutions per 10,000 pop 2006	Destruction orders made by court per 10,000 pop 2006	Penalties imposed by courts per 10,000 pop 2006
Antrim	6	0	0	0
Ards	4	0	0	0
Armagh	19	0	0	0
Ballymena	1	0	0	0
Ballymoney	5	0	0	0
Banbridge	1	1	1	1
Belfast	4	0	0	0
Carrickfergus	7	0	0	0
Castlereagh	4	0	0	0
Coleraine	11	0	0	0
Cookstown	11	0	0	0
Craigavon	5	0	0	0
Derry	6	0	0	0
Down	14	0	0	0
Dungannon	15	0	0	0
Fermanagh	8	0	0	0
Larne	0	0	0	0
Limavady	8	1	0	1
Lisburn	6	0	0	0
Magherafelt	6	0	0	0
Moyle	14	1	0	0
Newry	2	0	0	0
Newtownabbey	4	0	0	0
North Down	8	1	0	1
Omagh	8	0	0	0
Strabane	5	0	0	0

More serious offences include attacks on people, sheep and other animals.

Table 10: dangerous dogs in NI, 2006

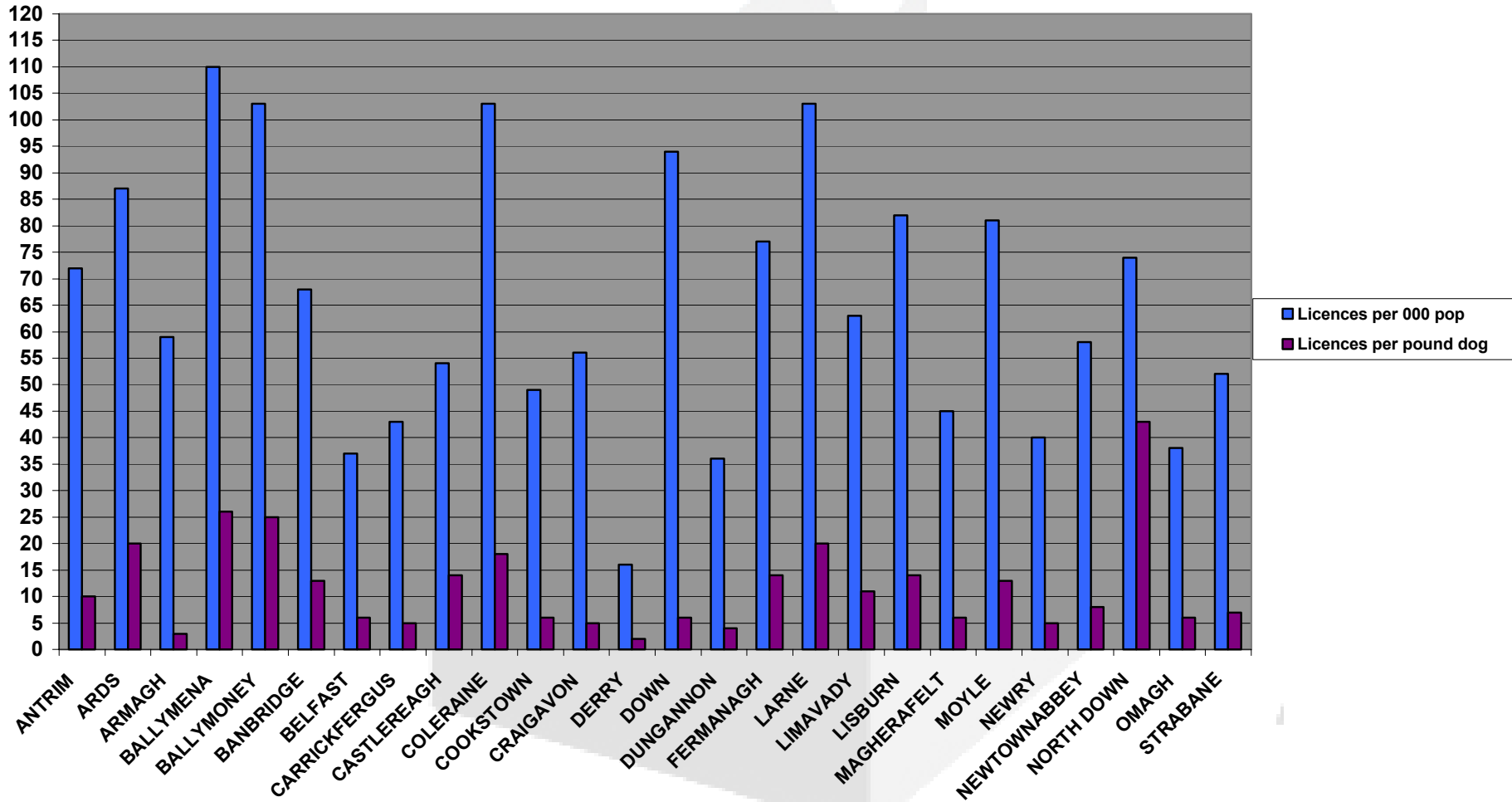


Council	Number of dangerous dogs dealt with in 2006	Number of prosecutions taken 2006	Successful prosecutions 2006	Penalty imposed by court 2006
Antrim	10	0	0	0
Ards	1	1	1	1
Armagh	0	0	0	0
Ballymena	6	0	1	1
Ballymoney	1	1	0	0
Banbridge	5	0	0	0
Belfast	105	4	0	0
Carrickfergus	0	0	0	0
Castlereagh	4	4	0	0
Coleraine	6	0	0	0
Cookstown	0	0	0	0
Craigavon	1	0	0	0
Derry	0	0	0	0
Down	8	0	0	0
Dungannon	7	1	1	1
Fermanagh	0	0	0	0
Larne	1	0	0	0
Limavady	0	0	0	0
Lisburn	23	0	0	0
Magherafelt	0	0	0	0
Moyle	1	0	0	0
Newry	1	0	0	0
Newtownabbey	9	0	0	0
North Down	9	5	2	2
Omagh	0	0	0	0
Strabane	0	0	0	0
Totals	198	16	5	5

Graph 5: Licences per thousand of population versus total numbers per pound dog NI, 2005-2006



Licences per 000 pop vs licences per pound dog, NI, 2006



5. Discussion

There is a significant problem in Northern Ireland in relation to stray and unwanted dogs. While there is legislation in place to deal with the control of dogs there is very little in the way of public awareness of the problem or what is required of owners. There have been public campaigns to encourage people to reduce, reuse and recycle their household waste or pay for the privilege of dumping it. The same however, doesn't apply to sentient animals and dogs may be acquired and got rid of on a whim.

The root cause of the problem is overproduction; there simply are not enough homes in Northern Ireland for all the dogs being produced. This overproduction is a result of uncontrolled breeding and a lack of knowledge on the part of the public as to the scale of the problem and the outcome for the dogs concerned. This is not acceptable in civilised society. This is not an issue of animal welfare, but one of human responsibility.

The dog control system itself is flawed. The legislation is about control of dogs and while the dogs pay the ultimate price, the owners by and large, are not held accountable. Unless there is accountability on the part of owners and indeed councils, dogs will continue to die in the unacceptable numbers we have at present.

6. Recommendations

- In order to reduce the number of dogs being produced, neutering/spaying of all pet dogs should be encouraged by way of a lifetime licence for neutered/spayed dogs.
- To ensure traceability, mandatory microchipping and registration of all dogs. Registration should be through a central database. Microchipping and neutering could be attached to a lifetime licence. Concessions should be made for pensioners and those on benefit.
- Those who fail to neuter/spay their dog would be required to pay a yearly licence which should be far more substantial than at present.
- Public awareness campaign to highlight the problems and advertise the location of pounds.
- Dog pounds should be governed by the same regulations as other establishments e.g. boarding kennels.
- Wardens and pound staff should be adequately trained.
- Revoke the Dangerous Dogs Order in favour of generic dangerous dogs legislation

7 Dog pound survey Northern Ireland

A survey was undertaken in 2003 on behalf of the Animal Welfare Federation of Northern Ireland. This survey focussed on the service provided by councils in relation to the provision of the dog pound service within each area. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix 1.

Letters and questionnaires were sent to all 26 District Councils. All councils replied to the survey. However, Cookstown Borough Council gave a very general reply and did not specifically answer or address any of the questions posed.

Results:

1. Use of scanners on call-outs.

69% of respondents said wardens carried scanners on call outs. Approximately 50% said they contacted owners before taking dogs to the pound.

2. Dogs scanned and returned to owners.

Only 38% of councils kept a record and most referred to scanning only

3. Dogs scanned and returned to owners

No response

4 Advice on Neutering and Spaying

92% of councils said they give advice.

5. Education on animal welfare – visiting schools.

88% of councils visit schools. Of the pounds who don't undertake this, one said they run classes when they can.

6. Out of hours service

Less than 50% of councils offer some sort of out of hours service. In some cases this is limited to weekends, public holidays or dealing with offences, i.e. attacks on people or livestock.

7. Council pound or private kennels

31% of Councils sub-contract the dog pound service to private providers.

8. Charges for reclaiming a dog

There appears to be no standardisation with regard to charges with rates varying from £2 to £35. Many pounds make additional charges for any extra days a dog may be in the pound. Only one pound offered a special rate which is offered to pensioners.

9. Circuses in Council areas

69% of councils claimed to have no remit for the welfare of animals. Some councils claimed to take account of animal welfare by summoning vets, inspecting prior to licence. One council said they had a code of practice.

10. Dog breeders

Most councils said their only responsibility was in regard to registration. A few claimed to visit or inspect prior to registration.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire to District Councils on the provision of the dog pound service, 2003. This survey was carried out on behalf of the Animal Welfare Federation of Northern Ireland.

The Animal Welfare Federation was founded in May 2001 to provide a vehicle for individuals and organisations concerned with animal welfare to come together and endeavour to jointly influence the quality of animal welfare in Northern Ireland.

As you are no doubt aware, over 5,000 dogs are destroyed each year through council pounds. This figure is much higher than in the rest of the UK. Therefore we would respectfully ask if your Council would please give thought to the following questions and reply.

1. Do your Dog wardens carry a microchip scanner on all call outs? Are all dogs scanned prior to going to the pound?
2. If a dog is scanned and microchip found, do your Dog Wardens contact the owner before placing the dog in the pound? It has been proved that if a dog warden returns the dog to the owner without it being sent to the pound the dog is less likely to stray as the owner has been given a warning and the Dog Warden is regarded more as an Educator than an Enforcer. Also it saves the Council having to take the dog to the pound and saves money.
3. Since the beginning of 2003 how many dogs have been scanned and returned to their owners?
4. On reclaiming or selling a dog, is advice given on the need to spay/neuter, the benefits regarding the dog's health, the help that is available if the person is on benefits etc?
5. Do your Dog Wardens visit schools, groups etc., regarding responsible dogs ownership?
6. If a dog is found straying out of normal working hours, week-ends, public holidays, what service does your Council provide during these times?
7. Does the stray dog go to your on-site pound or to private kennels?
8. How much do you charge for reclaiming a dog, do you have a special rate for people on benefits?
9. If a circus comes to your Council area, do you have a remit to monitor the welfare of the animals?
10. With regard to dog breeders, does the monitoring of the welfare of dogs come under your Council's jurisdiction?