Companion Animals NZ
A Good Life for Animals

# Companion Animals in New Zealand

## NZ Pet Data Report 2024

# Message from the Director of A Good Life for Animals Centre - CANZ

Kia ora koutou

At Companion Animals New Zealand, we are dedicated to advancing animal welfare through rigorous research, community engagement, and transformative changes in human behaviour. We are on a mission to ensure every companion animal in New Zealand lives A Good Life, and we believe that promoting responsible guardianship is key to achieving this goal.

By leveraging evidence-based research, we aim to enhance understanding of the needs of companion animals, ensuring they thrive in loving households. We are committed to being a leader in knowledge creation and dissemination, demonstrating how a socially responsible nation can engage its citizens to foster positive human-animal interactions.

To effectively advance companion animal welfare, we emphasise the importance of data collection and analysis, which includes understanding the demographics of companion animals, their sources, the rates of de-sexing and microchipping, trends over time and valuable insights regarding companion animal guardianship.

We are pleased to be able to share the Companion Animals in New Zealand 2024 Report with researchers, educators, policymakers, veterinarians, animal welfare organisations, animal related businesses and motivated animal guardians. We believe that by deepening our understanding of the important roles companion animals play in our lives, we can inspire meaningful change that enhances their well-being and enriches our communities.

As with previous reports we acknowledge the considerable work involved with producing this report and thank our research partner – InsightsHQ, the participants of the survey and the Companion Animals New Zealand staff for their valuable input.

Ngā mihi nui

Professor Natalie Waran

BSc (Hons), PhD
Director, A Good Life for Animals Centre - CANZ



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# Definition of 'Companion Animal'

**A companion animal is any animal that shares a living environment and relationship with humans.**

The term 'companion animal' is an all-encompassing phraseology given to an entire spectrum of animals with whom interaction and/or companionship is enjoyed by humans, and where a responsible guardianship is established and accepted for their welfare by humans.

## Note: Disclaimer

The results herein are indicative trends.

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# Introduction

## 1.1 Report Context

Companion Animals New Zealand (CANZ) has compiled Companion Animals in New Zealand 2024 (this report) as an update to and expansion of its similarly named 2011, 2016, and 2020 reports.

*Note: Surveys for the 2016 report were completed in June 2015 and so data is reported as 2015.*

The current report builds on previous findings to gain a deeper understanding of the role and importance of companion animals in the lives of New Zealanders and how this relationship is evolving over time.

In 2024, we significantly increased the scope of the research through a more comprehensive research questionnaire. This report represents a summary of the top-line data and insights available. There is a wealth of additional data available (an overview of which is provided in point 1.3 below), therefore additional analysis, insights, and reporting are available upon request.

## 1.2 Methodology

Insights HQ was commissioned to undertake a survey of New Zealand households (the New Zealand Companion Animal Census) to size and profile the companion animal population, as well as assess attitudes towards companion animals in NZ. The report is independent and has no industry or business support.

**The Companion Animals New Zealand Pet Data Report is the only, representative independent survey of pet population and ownership insights in NZ. It is demographically representative of dog, cat, and horse / pony owners, whilst also providing information about other pet species, including rabbits.**

In 2024, Insights HQ conducted this online research among a nationally representative sample of adults aged 18 years and older. Quotas were employed using Statistics NZ 2023 Census data to ensure the sample was representative of the NZ household population by age, gender, and region. A multi cell quota design created a total of 40 quotas using different combinations of age, gender, region. For example, Female-Auckland-35-44 years; Male-Auckland-35-44 years. Data was then weighted to reflect the NZ population within each of these 40 quota cells. The final demographic breakdown is provided in the Appendix.

Data was gathered between 23 September and 16 October 2024. A follow-up booster was conducted between 17 January and 3 February 2025 among rabbit owners to increase the sample size for rabbit owner insights. This 2024 dataset is comprised of a total representative sample of 2,058 respondents, which included 1,324 companion animal owners (see Appendix for details). A sample of 2,000 represents a sufficiently robust size (see section *1.6 Interpreting the Data*) to reflect the NZ household population allowing for confidence that sample observations closely match what we would expect to see within the population. However, where a specific companion animal species population is small in number, the margin of error around the figures provided will be greater than the preferred 2.2%.

Due to a small horse / pony response rate in 2024, a second data source was added. A nationally representative sample of over 1,000 people were surveyed every month from May to November 2022, resulting in a nationally representative sample of 8,130 respondents and included a total of 149 companion horse / pony owners. This data is only used for the household penetration and population estimates. All other horse data reported (e.g., owner insights etc) uses the 2024 dataset. Companion horses are defined as those that are primarily leisure/non-working.

The sample was sourced from the **my2cents** research panel, an invite only research panel. Only verified individuals are invited to join ensuring the research sample contains real verified humans, with the ability to recontact individual respondents to validate and confirm data.

## 1.3 Project scope

The project scope was widened in 2024 to provide a more comprehensive, census-like view of the companion animal population in New Zealand, including asking owners to describe individual animals. Questions were asked about:

- The size, profile, and demographics of the companion animal population in New Zealand
- Attitudes and behaviours of companion animal guardians (pet owners) including measuring responsible pet ownership (e.g. registration, microchipping, desexing, vaccination)
- Attitudes and behaviour regarding companion animal welfare
- Understanding expenditure for companion animals in New Zealand
- Health, veterinary visits, attitudes, and general conditions
- Food and nutrition including food type and purchase channel
- Insurance penetration including drivers and barriers
- Measuring and understanding how these areas are changing over time
- Capturing the numbers, reason for acquisition, and source of an expanded list of species

In addition to the expanded scope, respondents who shared their home with multiple companion animals were asked the name of each animal and were then asked about each individual animal. This ensures we can analyse data and provide insights at the individual animal level, which was not previously possible. For example, we can look at differences by the age and breed of animals.

This report summarises NZ's companion animal population and ownership trends. The remaining data capturing companion animal owner insights and behaviours will be the subject of further reports to be published during the first half of 2025.

## 1.4 Evolving terminology

CANZ believes it is important to evolve the terminology used around companion animals to more appropriately reflect the relationship between people and companion animals and the role they play in our lives.

CANZ believes the term 'owner' infers possession and does not reflect the duty of care people have for the animals in their care. As such, CANZ fully supports the increasing usage of the term 'guardian' or 'carer'. The survey includes questions (added in the 2020 questionnaire) to understand if New Zealanders, both pet owners and non-pet owners, share this view.

CANZ acknowledges that the majority of people still use the traditional terms (as our survey results demonstrate). Therefore, for the purposes of the report we use the terms interchangeably, to demonstrate that pet can be replaced with companion animal.

## 1.5 Data reporting

- Throughout the report, some figures have been rounded to the nearest decimal point. This may result in minor variations between sums of the component items and totals, and some percentages may appear to not total 100%.
- The 2024 report represents the fourth edition of **Companion Animals New Zealand's Companion Animal Census**.
- Prior to reporting, data was cleaned to remove spoiled and missing data, a standard practice when handling market research data.
- When discussing subsets within the data (e.g., cat owners that did not microchip), we have not extrapolated to the population level and rather refer to the percentage of respondents.
- Where extrapolating data to population level data (e.g. the number of cats in NZ) we have used Statistics NZ data regarding the number of NZ households as of June 2024.
    - www.stats.govt.nz/topics/population
    - Household population = 2,012,400 households

## 1.6 Interpreting the data

In interpreting the results and extrapolating insights to the NZ household population we take into account statistically significant differences and the margin of error.

### Statistical significance

- We calculate statistical significance using z tests (with a standard 95% confidence level) to test for differences between proportions. When we display an answer option as statistically significant, it means the difference between two groups has less than a 5% probability of occurring by chance or sampling error alone, which is displayed as $p < 0.05$. All statistically significant differences are indicated in the text or tables; statistically higher figures are denoted by green font and statistically lower figures are denoted by a red font.
- For our sample size of 2,058, a statistically significant difference between two groups at the 95% confidence level will be approximately 3.05%.

### Margin of error

- Margin of error is used in research to determine the precision of a result, such as a poll, survey, or a scientific study. Expressed as +/- percentage points, margin of error tells you to what degree the research results may differ from the real-world results, revealing how different – more and less – the stated percentage may be from reality.
- For our sample of 2,058 we would expect a margin of error of +/-2.2%.

## 1.7 Ethical consent

This study has been approved by the EIT Ethics Committee on 18-09-24, Reference # EA19160924. All respondents were given comprehensive information about the research including:

- A description of the research including the scope of questions and the rationale for collecting the data
- An overview of what the research data would be used for
- A description of what participating in the research survey would involve
- The benefits and possible risks of participation
- Their rights as a respondent, including being free to opt out of participation
- Confidentiality and data privacy procedures

All respondents were asked to give their informed consent prior to participating and as a pre-requisite for participating in the survey.

# 02 Executive Summary

# 02
# Executive Summary

## 2.1 New Zealand is a nation of animal lovers

In New Zealand, it is estimated that almost two thirds (63%) of households share their home with a companion animal.

Cats are the most popular companion animal. It is estimated that there are currently over 1.26 million cats, with 40% of households sharing their home with at least one cat. The second most popular companion animal are dogs; there are an estimated 830,000 dogs currently in NZ, with nearly a third of households (31%) sharing their home with at least one dog.

Many NZ households are home to multiple pet types, with a third of households (32%) sharing their home with more than one type of companion animal.

See page 16 for more detailed breakdown of other species and comparison to 2020.

**New Zealand companion animal population breakdown, 2024**

| Companion animal type | Household penetration | Average number in home | 2024 estimated population |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cat | 40% | 1.6 | 1,261,000 |
| Dog | 31% | 1.3 | 830,000 |
| Horse / Pony | 3.4% | 1.9 | 106,000 |
| Rabbit** | 1.1% | 1.5 | |
| Other small mammal *(e.g. rat, mouse, guinea pig)** | 0.5% | | |
| Fish* | 5.0% | | |
| Reptile* | 0.5% | | |
| Donkey* | 0.2% | | |
| Goat* | 0.5% | | |
| Bird *(excluding fowl)** | 2.4% | | |
| Fowl *(e.g. chicken, duck, pigeon, goose)** | 5.5% | | |

Base size for household penetration and estimated population: All respondents from 2024 dataset n=2,058; except for horse / pony estimates, which used 2022 dataset n=8,130

Base size for average number in home: Dog owners n=639, Cat owners n=858, Rabbit owner n=65 (2024 dataset); Horse / pony owners n=149 (2022 dataset)

* Data not captured in 2024 regarding average number in home and therefore population estimates not available

** Population estimate not available for rabbits due to low rabbit base size

While most households with companion animals have only one species, nearly a third of households have more than one species. Companion animals are particularly common in homes with children. Ownership declines in individuals over 65, and higher-income households are more likely to have companion animals compared to those earning less than $100k annually.

Among people who do not currently have companion animals, a significant number (60% or approximately 440,000 households) express a desire to have one. The main barriers to pet ownership include unsuitable lifestyles and perceived cost. The primary reasons for acquiring pets are companionship and familiarity with the animal type.

Cats are most commonly acquired from animal rescues like the SPCA, whereas dogs are often obtained from breeders or through private advertisements. Informal networks, such as friends and family, also play a significant role in acquisition. Horses are frequently sourced through private advertisements and personal connections.

When it comes to trusted sources for pet-related information, veterinarians are the most trusted, with an increasing trust level since 2020. Other sources include the internet, the SPCA, and pet shops. Different age groups show varying levels of trust in these sources.

When considering the most important components of responsible companion animal ownership, provision of a nutritious diet, veterinary visits when their companion animals is ill or injured, and adequate shelter were most frequently mentioned. However, some differences exist between species. Horse / pony owners prioritise health and nutrition, while rabbit owners focus on nutrition and safety. Conversely, some points were viewed as less important (such as training for cats and rabbits, regular companionships with other dogs for dogs, and enrichment for horses).

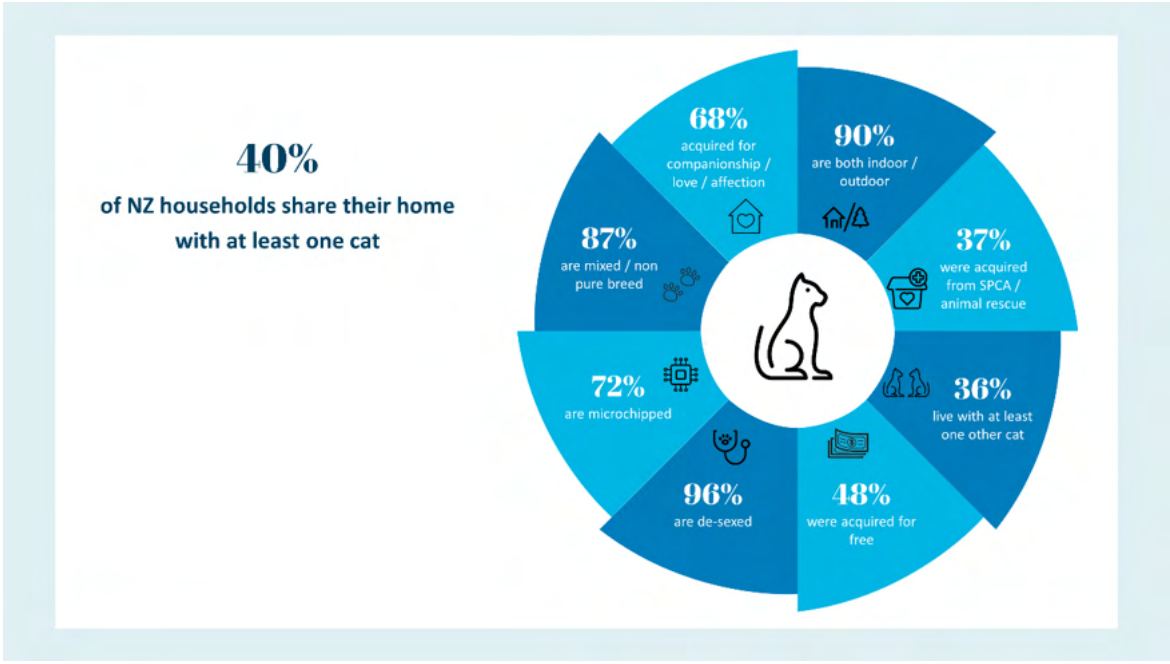
The incidence of de-sexing is high among companion animals; owners reported that 96% of cats, 85% of dogs, and 48% of rabbits had been desexed. The primary reason for de-sexing is to prevent unwanted litters, with 68% of cat owners and 67% of dog owners mentioning this. Additionally, 31% of cat owners and 40% of dog owners noted preventing unwanted behaviours as another reason.

Microchipping continues to increase in cats and dogs, with an estimated 72% of cats and 89% of dogs being microchipped at the time of this survey. The primary reason for microchipping pets is to aid in their recovery if lost or stolen; however, for dog owners, the legal requirement is also a significant factor, while many cat owners acquired their cats already microchipped. Barriers to microchipping persist including perceptions about necessity and cost from cat, horse and rabbit owners. For dogs, the main barriers include lack of time and a belief that losing the dog was unlikely. The number of cats microchipped and registered with NZCAR align with the number reported by cat owners; however, dog owners were more uncertain about their dogs' microchip and registration status with NZCAR.

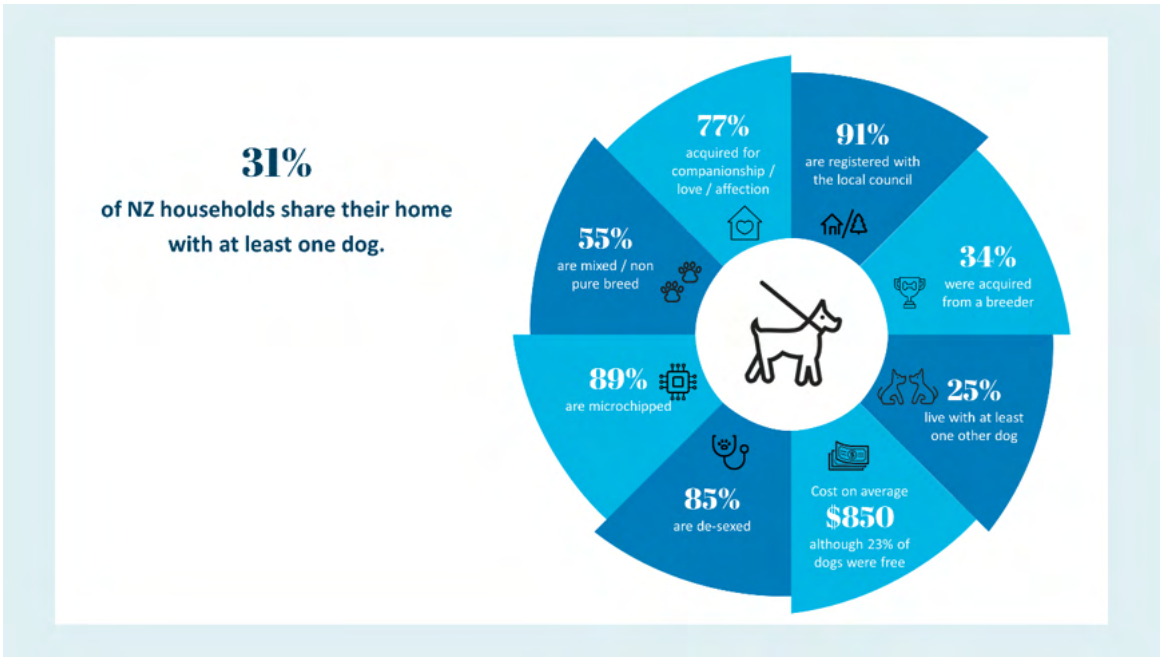
Dog owners are the most likely to have taken their animals to the vet in the past year, with 85% doing so and 58% going for an annual health checkup. In contrast, horses/ponies (18%) and rabbits (20%) are the least likely to have annual checkups or vet visits in the past 12 months. Rabbit owners are more likely to report their animals having no health conditions (78%), while 58% of cat owners and approximately half of dog (47%) and horse (48%) owners report no health issues. Two-thirds of cat owners have taken their cats to the vet in the past year, with 41% doing so for an annual checkup. The main reason for not visiting the vet across all species is that owners take their animals when they are sick, not perceiving a need for regular checkups.

## 2.2 Snapshots of companion animals

### Snapshot of companion cats in New Zealand, 2024




### Snapshot of companion dogs in New Zealand, 2024



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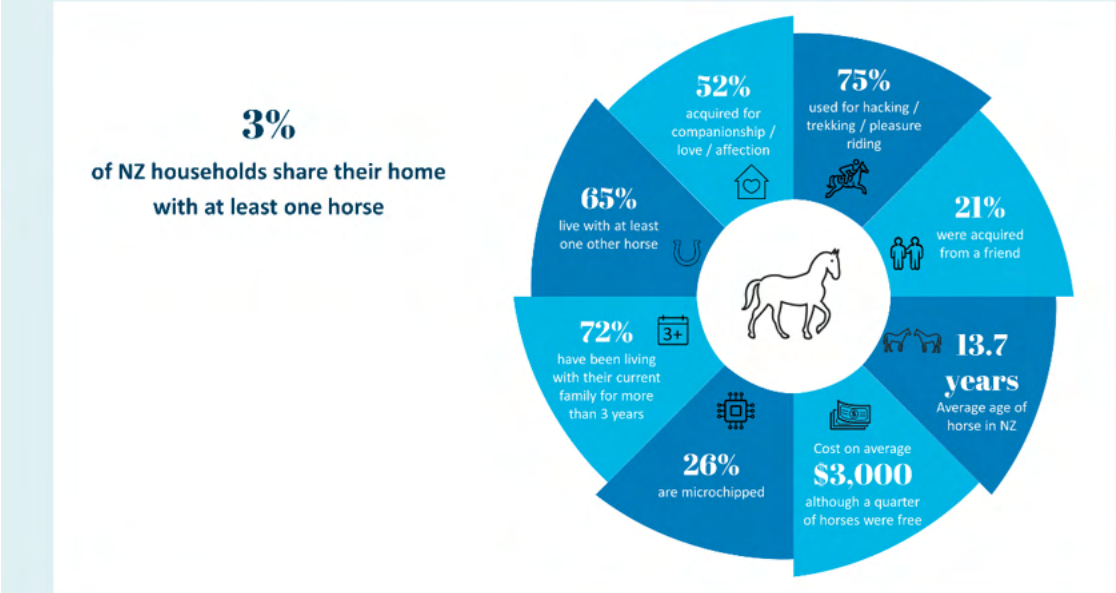
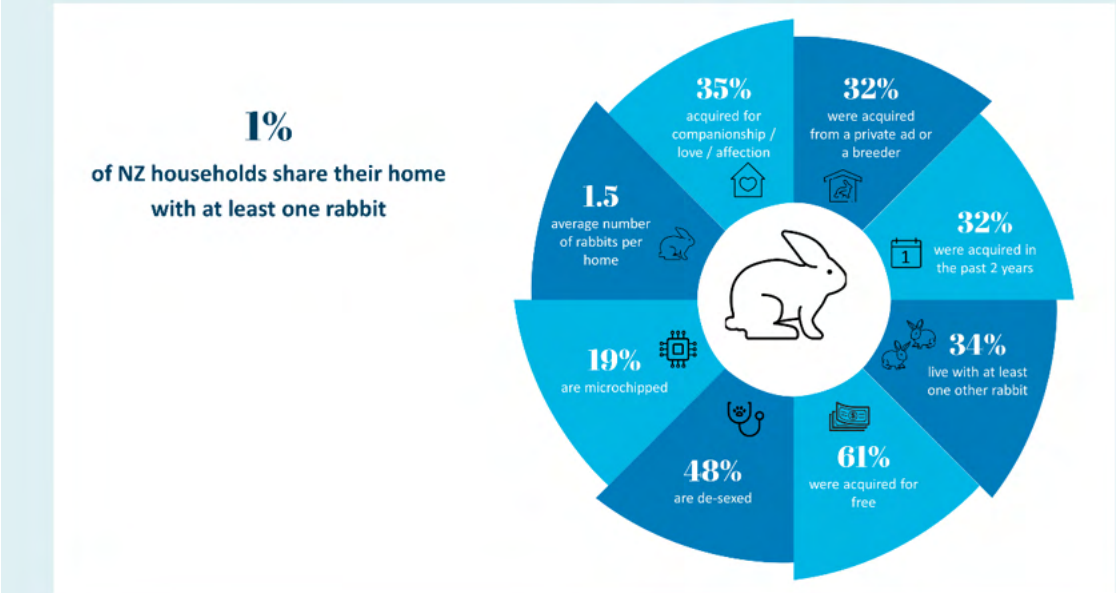
## Snapshot of companion horses in New Zealand, 2024




## Snapshot of companion rabbits in New Zealand, 2024



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# 03 Companion Animal Population

# 03
# Companion Animal Population

## 3.1 Population trends

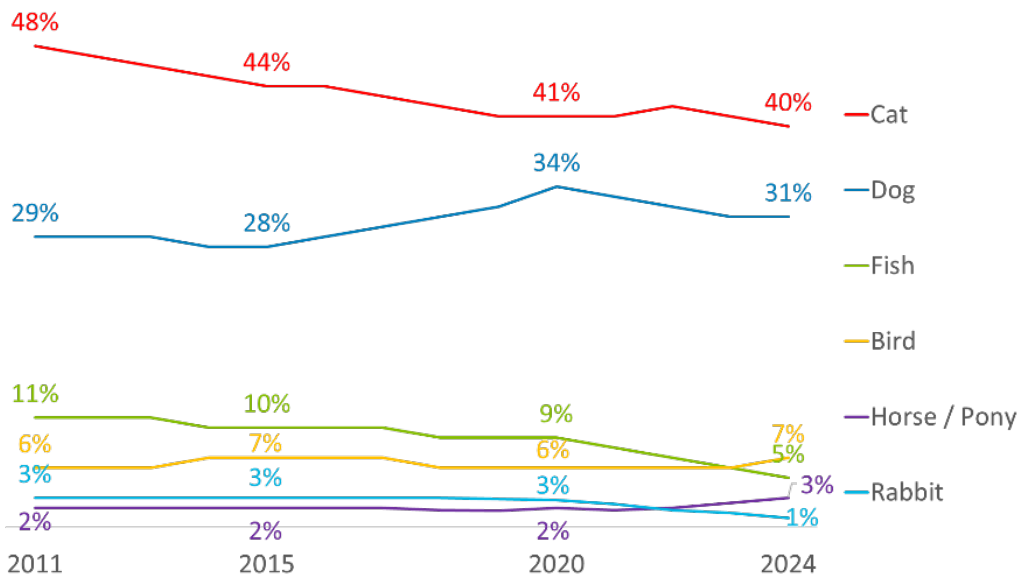
The proportion of households with companion animals has remained relatively unchanged and currently sits at 63% (68% in 2011, 64% in 2015, 64% in 2020).

Cats remain the most popular companion animal (40% of households) and over the past 4 years we do not see a significant change in the cat population. It is estimated that there are approximately 1.26 million companion cats.

The number of households who share their household with a dog has declined from 34% in 2020 to 31% in 2024. There are an estimated 830,000 companion dogs in New Zealand.

Horse numbers are estimated to be 106,000, with a household penetration of 3.4%.

**New Zealand companion animal population breakdown, trended**




Base: All respondents n=2,058



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| Companion animal type | 2024 Household penetration | 2024 Estimated population *(and range*)* |
|---|---|---|
| Cat | 40% | 1,261,000 *(1,195,000 – 1,326,000)* |
| Dog | 31% | 830,000 *(780,000 – 885,000)* |
| Horse / Pony | 3.4% | 106,000 *(90,000 – 123,000)* |
| Rabbit** | 1.1% | |

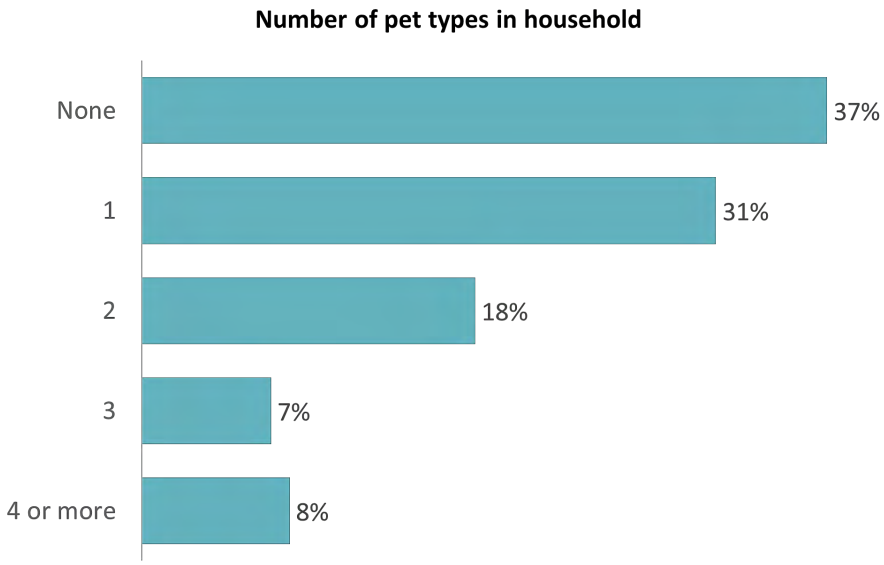
Base size for household penetration and estimated population: All respondents from 2024 dataset n=2,058; except for horse / pony estimates, which used 2022 dataset n=8,130

Base size for average number in home: Dog owners n=639, Cat owners n=858, Rabbit owner n=65 (2024 dataset); Horse / pony owners n=149 (2022 dataset)

* Range refers to the population estimated margins of error; species with low household penetration will inherently have higher margins of error

** Population estimates not available for rabbits due to low rabbit base size

The majority of New Zealanders who share their home with a companion animal, do so with just one species (i.e. just cat(s) or just dog(s). However, a third of New Zealand households share their home with more than one type of companion animal species (e.g., dogs and cats in the same household).




Base: All respondents: n=2,058

## 3.2 Demographic profile of households with companion animals

### 3.2.1 Age and presence of children in household

Companion animals are part of 71% of households with young children, and 66% of households with older children (aged 9-17 years); this value is 60% for households with no children. Households with older children appear to share their home with multiple species; we see higher incidence of dogs (42%) and cats (51%) among these households compared to the population as a whole.

Past the age of 65, companion animal ownership declines; 50% of over 65 households share their home with a companion animal, compared to all other age groups (62% or higher companion animal ownership).

Dog ownership does not skew by age, while cat ownership is highest among those aged 45-64 (48-52% cat ownership, compared to 37% for under 35 households or 31% for over 65 households).

| | Age of owner | | | | | Presence and age of children in household | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Under 35 years | 35-44 years | 45-54 years | 55-64 years | 65+ years | Child(ren) aged 0-8 | Child(ren) aged 9-17 | No children |
| Cat | 37% | 40% | 52% | 48% | 31% | 38% | 51% | 39% |
| Dog | 31% | 31% | 34% | 33% | 25% | 35% | 42% | 28% |
| Horse / Pony | 2.7% | 1.7% | 2.4% | 4.6% | 5.8% | 2.7% | 3.4% | 3.6% |
| Rabbit | 0.7% | 1.6% | 1.2% | 2.2% | 0.6% | 1.6% | 2.5% | 0.7% |
| Fish | 4.7% | 6.5% | 6.5% | 5.5% | 4.5% | 6.5% | 8.7% | 4.6% |
| Other small mammal *(e.g. rat, mouse, guinea pig)* | 0.2% | 0.9% | 0.7% | 1.1% | 0.2% | 0.8% | 1.4% | 0.3% |
| Bird *(excluding fowl)* | 2.2% | 1.7% | 2.9% | 2.6% | 2.8% | 0.9% | 3.4% | 2.5% |
| Fowl *(e.g. chicken, duck, pigeon, goose)* | 4.3% | 7.0% | 5.4% | 9.2% | 3.7% | 8.9% | 8.6% | 4.7% |
| **Share house with ANY companion animal type** | **62%** | **66%** | **71%** | **72%** | **50%** | **71%** | **66%** | **60%** |
| *Base size* | *424* | *350* | *420* | *401* | *463* | *242* | *357* | *1,519* |

Statistically significant differences are denoted by red (lower) and green (higher); it means the difference between the groups has less than a 5% probability of occurring by chance or sampling error alone.

### 3.2.2 Geography

Households in the North Island (excluding Auckland and Wellington) have the highest companion animal ownership (73%), compared to the rest of the country. These households are more likely to share their household with a cat (46%) compared to other regions, and more likely to have a dog (38%). Households in the South Island (excluding Canterbury) (36%) are also more likely to share their home with a dog compared to other regions.

Auckland households are least likely to share their home with a companion animal (56%) and significantly less likely to have a cat and/or dog.

| | Region | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Auckland | Canterbury | Wellington | Rest of North Island* | Rest of South Island** |
| Dog | 24% | 30% | 29% | 38% | 36% |
| Cat | 35% | 44% | 41% | 46% | 36% |
| Horse / Pony | 1.0% | 4.8% | 1.1% | 5.5% | 4.7% |
| Rabbit | 1.4% | 0.8% | 0.4% | 0.8% | 2.6% |
| Fish | 3.1% | 4.7% | 5.5% | 7% | 8.3% |
| Other small mammal *(e.g. rat, mouse, guinea pig)* | 0.6% | 0.8% | 0.0% | 0.6% | 0.4% |
| Bird *(excluding fowl)* | 1.8% | 0.7% | 2.3% | 3.4% | 4% |
| Fowl *(e.g. chicken, duck, pigeon, goose)* | 2.2% | 5.2% | 6.0% | 7.8% | 9.3% |
| **Share house with ANY companion animal type** | **56%** | **63%** | **62%** | **73%** | **64%** |
| *Base size* | *627* | *238* | *295* | *666* | *232* |

Statistically significant differences are denoted by red (lower) and green (higher); it means the difference between the groups has less than a 5% probability of occurring by chance or sampling error alone.
* Rest of North Island excludes Auckland and Wellington
** Rest of South Island excludes Canterbury

### 3.2.3 Household income

Higher income households are more likely to share their home with a companion animal. Almost three quarters (72%) of households with an income over $100k have a companion animal compared to over half (59%) of households earning less than $100k per year.

This pattern is the same for both cats and dogs:

- 38% of higher income households are estimated to share their home with at least one dog, compared to 24% of lower income households.
- 46% of higher income households are estimated to share their home with at least one cat, compared to 39% of lower income households.

| | Household Income | |
|---|---|---|
| | Under $100k | Over $100k |
| Cat | 39% | 46% |
| Dog | 24% | 38% |
| Horse / Pony | 3.7% | 3.1% |
| Rabbit | 0.9% | 0.9% |
| Fish | 3.5% | 5.1% |
| Other small mammal *(e.g. rat, mouse, guinea pig)* | 0.2% | 0.8% |
| Bird *(excluding fowl)* | 2.3% | 1.9% |
| Fowl *(e.g., chicken, duck, pigeon, goose)* | 5.3% | 6.1% |
| **Share house with ANY companion animal type** | **59%** | **72%** |
| *Base size* | *741* | *732* |

Statistically significant differences are denoted by red (lower) and green (higher); it means the difference between the groups has less than a 5% probability of occurring by chance or sampling error alone.

### 3.2.4 Ethnicity

NZ European (67%) and Māori (74%) households are more likely to share their home with a companion animal compared with other ethnicities.

- NZ European households are more likely to share their home with a cat (43%) or a dog (43%), while Asian households are less likely (18% and 23%, respectively).
- Māori households are more likely to share their home with a dog (41%).

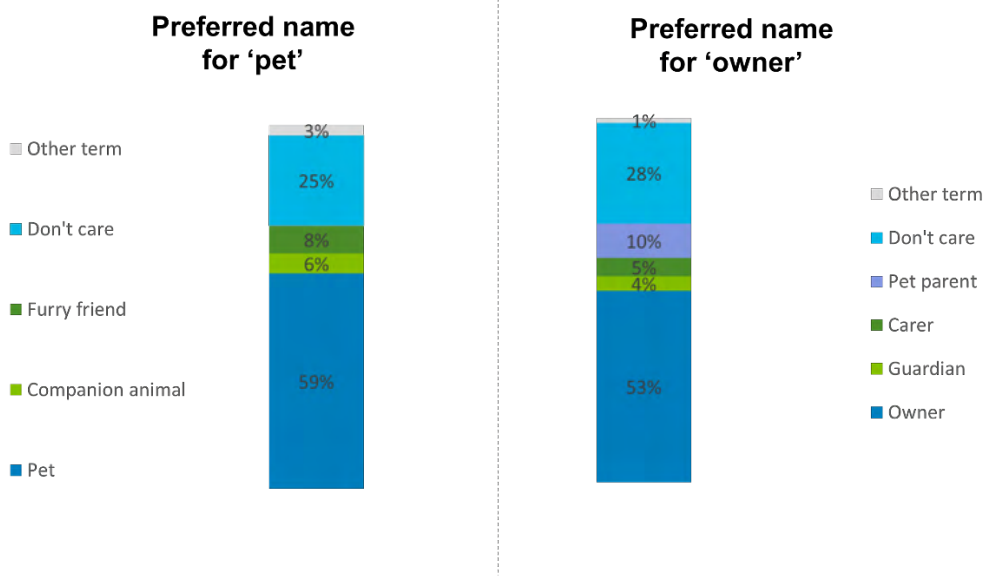
| | Ethnicity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | NZ European | Māori | Pacific Peoples* | Asian | Other |
| Cat | 43% | 40% | 38% | 23% | 44% |
| Dog | 33% | 41% | 22% | 18% | 26% |
| Horse / Pony | 4.2% | 0.4% | - | - | 2.6% |
| Rabbit | 0.9% | 1.6% | - | 1.4% | 1.3% |
| Fish | 5.6% | 7.7% | 3.9% | 6% | 2.8% |
| Other small mammal *(e.g. rat, mouse, guinea pig)* | 0.4% | 0.6% | - | 0.5% | 1.9% |
| Bird *(excluding fowl)* | 2.4% | 1.1% | - | 2.1% | 2.3% |
| Fowl *(e.g., chicken, duck, pigeon, goose)* | 5.7% | 6.8% | 4.8% | 2.0% | 7.3% |
| **Share house with ANY companion animal type** | **67%** | **74%** | **51%** | **45%** | **64%** |
| *Base size* | *1,271* | *123* | *29* | *133* | *128* |

Statistically significant differences are denoted by red (lower) and green (higher); it means the difference between the groups has less than a 5% probability of occurring by chance or sampling error alone.
*Due to small base size, no statistical inferences are made for Pacific Peoples.

## 3.3 Preferred terminology

The majority of respondents (59%) preferred the term 'pet', regardless of current animal ownership status. Preference for pet was higher among males (63%), compared to females (56%), and also higher among families with children in the household (69%), compared to households without children (56%). 'Companion animal' was the preferred term for 6% of respondents. This is lower than 2020, where 20% of respondents preferred this term.

Over half of respondents (53%), preferred the term 'owner', aligning with the 2020 value (51%). Preference was higher among respondents with children (61%), compared to those without children (50%).

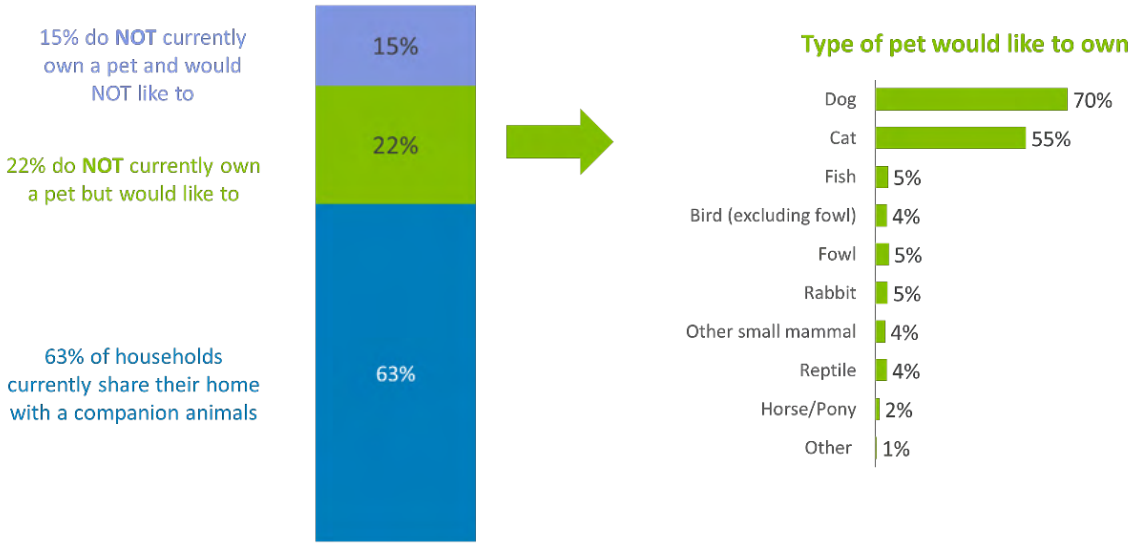



Base: All respondents: n=2,058

## 3.4 Desire to acquire

Of those who do not currently own a companion animal, over half (60%) would like to do so. This equates to 22% of NZ households (or approximately 440,000 households).

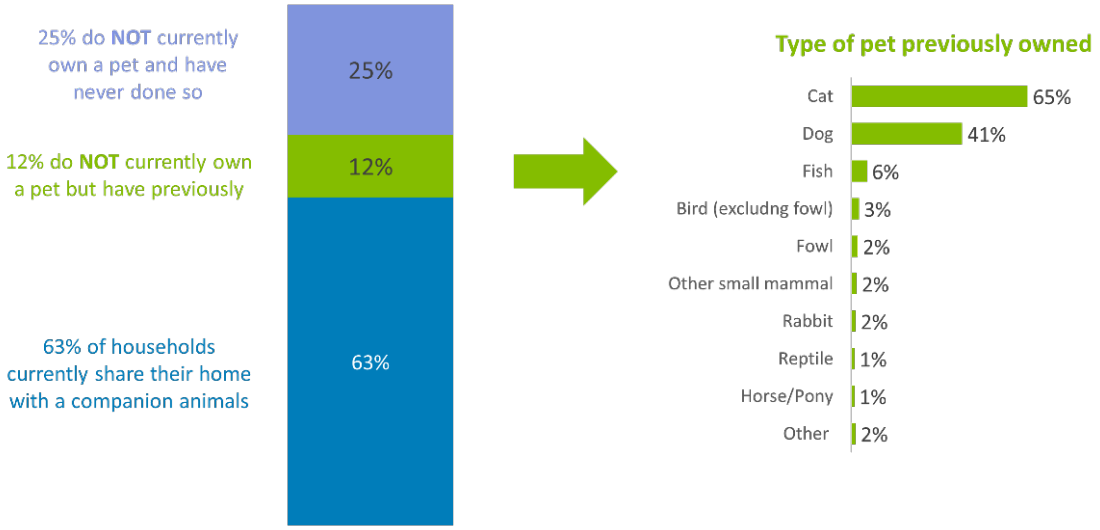
The main barriers to this group having companion animals in their home are lifestyle not being suitable (50%), and cost (43%). Among NZ households who did not currently have a companion animal, dogs (70%) and cats (55%) were the most commonly cited preferred future pet.




Base: Non-pet owners: n=734, Non-pet owners who would like to own a pet: n=422

## 3.5 Previous ownership

Of those who do not currently own a companion animal, over a third (34%) have previously done so. This equates to 12% of NZ households (or approximately 240,000 households). The most common previous pets reported were cats (65%) followed by dogs (41%).




Base: Non-pet owners: n=734, Non-pet owners who have previously owned a pet: n=255



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# 04
# Ownership Insights

# 04
# Ownership Insights

In this and subsequent sections, subsets within the data (e.g., horse owner reasons for acquisition) are not extrapolated to the population level and instead are discussed as the percentage of survey respondents.

## 4.1 Reasons for acquiring companion animals

Companionship was the main driver reported behind getting an animal. This reinforces the important and positive role companion animals can play in a household. Another key driver was familiarity with that animal type (e.g., person has had this type of animal before). Subsequent drivers differed by species:

- Cats because they needed a home
- Dogs and horses / ponies for exercise
- Horses / ponies because respondents have had this type of animal before or to breed / enter competitions
- Rabbits as fun for the children

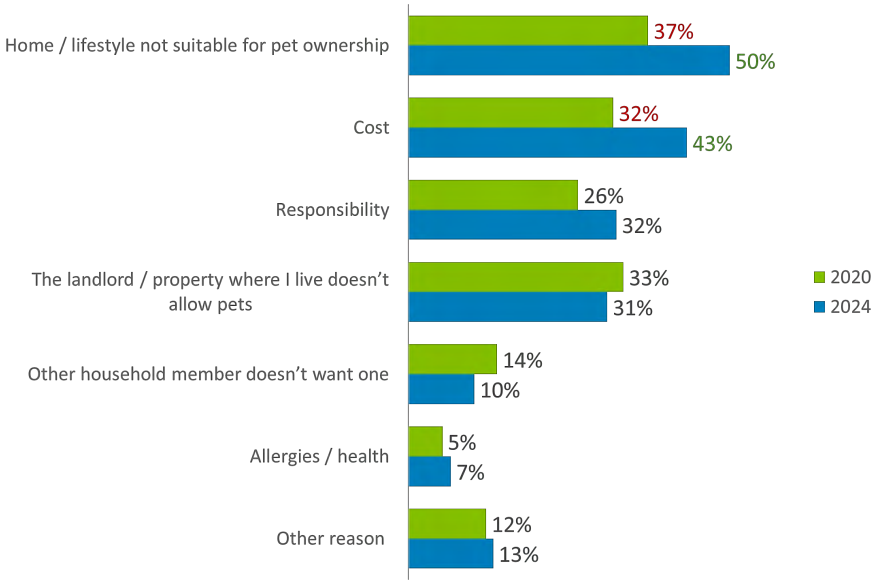
Birds were typically acquired for companionship and familiarity. For fish, the main reasons included relaxation, decoration, and familiarity. The predominant reason for keeping fowl was eggs, with some people reporting familiarity and companionship as well.

| | Cat | Dog | Horse / pony | Rabbits | Birds | Fowl | Fish |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Companionship / love / affection | 68% | 77% | 52% | 35% | 34% | 14% | 5% |
| I've had this type of pet in the past | 56% | 39% | 59% | 32% | 31% | 22% | 31% |
| Relaxation | 20% | 22% | 43% | 11% | 8% | 8% | 44% |
| They needed a home / adopted us | 37% | 22% | 13% | 17% | 7% | 12% | 4% |
| Encourage exercise | 1% | 36% | 30% | - | - | - | - |
| Pest control *(e.g., hunt mice)* | 11% | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Inherited from a friend / family member / neighbour | 14% | 8% | 5% | - | 18% | 13% | 11% |
| To breed / enter competitions / as a hobby | - | 1% | 45% | 4% | 9% | 5% | 3% |
| Fun for the children | 14% | 16% | 11% | 23% | 13% | 13% | 20% |
| Education / responsibility for children | 6% | 9% | 6% | 16% | 8% | 11% | 9% |
| It was someone else's decision | 9% | 12% | 1% | 16% | 26% | 12% | 19% |
| Security | - | 20% | - | - | - | - | - |
| It's a working animal | - | 4% | 8% | - | - | - | - |
| They were a gift | 4% | 2% | - | 5% | 4% | 2% | 5% |
| Decoration / looks nice | - | - | - | - | - | - | 39% |
| Eggs | - | - | - | - | - | 85% | - |
| Other | 4% | 4% | 10% | 16% | 9% | 9% | 10% |
| *Base size (pet owners)* | *858* | *639* | *74* | *65* | *52* | *123* | *113* |

Statistically significant differences are denoted by red (lower) and green (higher); it means the difference between the groups has less than a 5% probability of occurring by chance or sampling error alone.

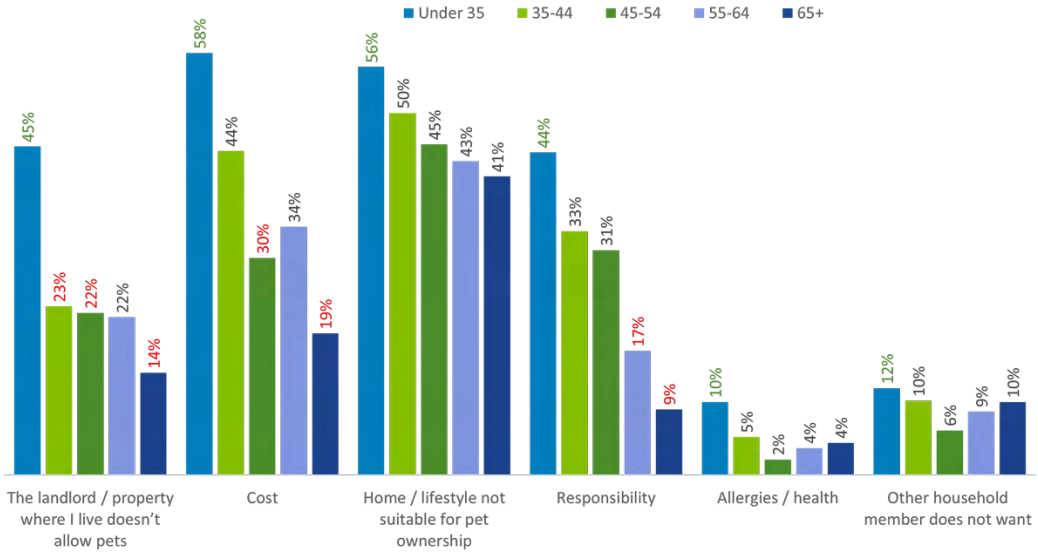
## 4.2 Barriers to acquiring companion animals

Key barriers to companion animal ownership were situational. Among the 22% of households who would like to share their home with an animal but do not currently do so (*section 3.4*), the top reported barriers were current lifestyle not being suitable (50%), and perceived cost (43%).




Base: Non-pet owners who would like to own a pet: n=422
Statistically significant differences are denoted by red (lower) and green (higher); it means the difference between the groups has less than a 5% probability of occurring by chance or sampling error alone.

Barriers to companion animal ownership skewed by age. Under 35s were more likely to have a landlord/property that did not allow pets. Both cost and responsibility as barriers skewed with age, becoming less of a barrier among older households.




Base: Non-pet owners who would like to own a pet:
Under 35: n=121, 35-44: n=87, 45-54: n=71, 55-64: n=52, 65+: n=91
Statistically significant differences are denoted by red (lower) and green (higher); it means the difference between the groups has less than a 5% probability of occurring by chance or sampling error alone.



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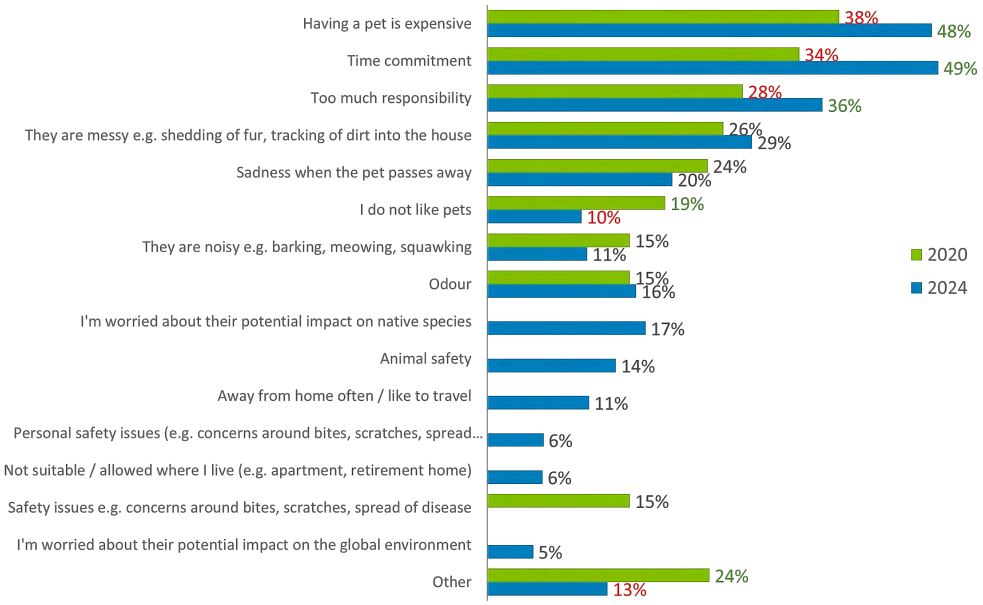
## 4.3 Reasons for not wanting a companion animal

Among households without a companion animal, the top reasons for not wanting one are the perceived cost (48% of respondents) and time commitments (49% of respondents). Also mentioned were concerns about responsibility (36% of respondents).

These perceived time, cost and responsibility barriers to wanting a companion animal have all increased significantly since 2020.




Base: Non-pet owners who would not like to own a pet: n=312
Statistically significant differences are denoted by red (lower) and green (higher); it means the difference between the groups has less than a 5% probability of occurring by chance or sampling error alone.

## 4.4 Where companion animals are sourced

The SPCA and other animal rescues were the most common places to acquire cats (22%), whereas dogs were more likely to be acquired from a breeder (34%) or through a private advertisement (21%) compared to other sources.

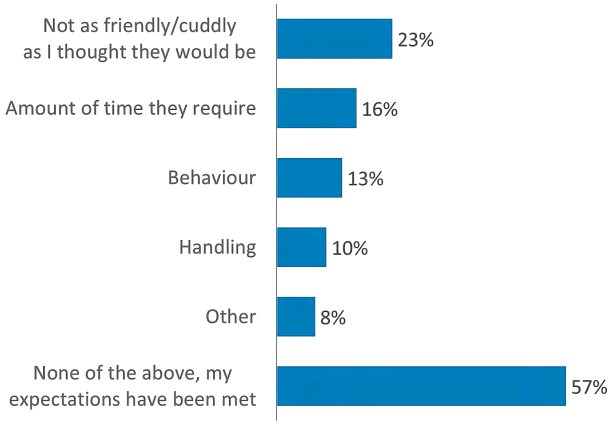
Informal networks were popular, with 23% of cats and 20% of dogs being acquired via a friend, family member, or neighbour. Over a third of horses were reported to be acquired through a private advertisement, and a further 21% were sourced via a friend.

| | Cat | Dog | Horse / Pony | Rabbit |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SPCA | 22% | 6% | 3% | 7% |
| Another animal rescue / shelter | 15% | 10% | 4% | 3% |
| Found / stray | 16% | 1% | - | 14% |
| Friend | 11% | 10% | 21% | 14% |
| Family member | 8% | 8% | 3% | 6% |
| From private advertisement | 8% | 21% | 36% | 16% |
| Breeder | 8% | 34% | - | 15% |
| Pet shop | 5% | 4% | - | 11% |
| Neighbour | 4% | 2% | 1% | 2% |
| Veterinarian | 2% | 1% | - | 4% |
| Bred it myself | 1% | 2% | 14% | 8% |
| Hobbyist / enthusiast | - | 1% | 6% | - |
| Off the track | - | - | 4% | - |
| Wild horse muster | - | - | 3% | - |
| *Base size (individual pets)* | *1,289 cats* | *848 dogs* | *176 horses* | *106 rabbits* |

## 4.5 Expectations when acquiring rabbits

A new question was introduced in the 2024 questionnaire asking rabbit owners "*have any of the following been different to your initial expectations or a surprise regarding your rabbit(s)?*".

A quarter of rabbit owners (23%) were surprised that the rabbit(s) was not as friendly / cuddly as initially expected, while 16% were surprised by the amount of time they require.

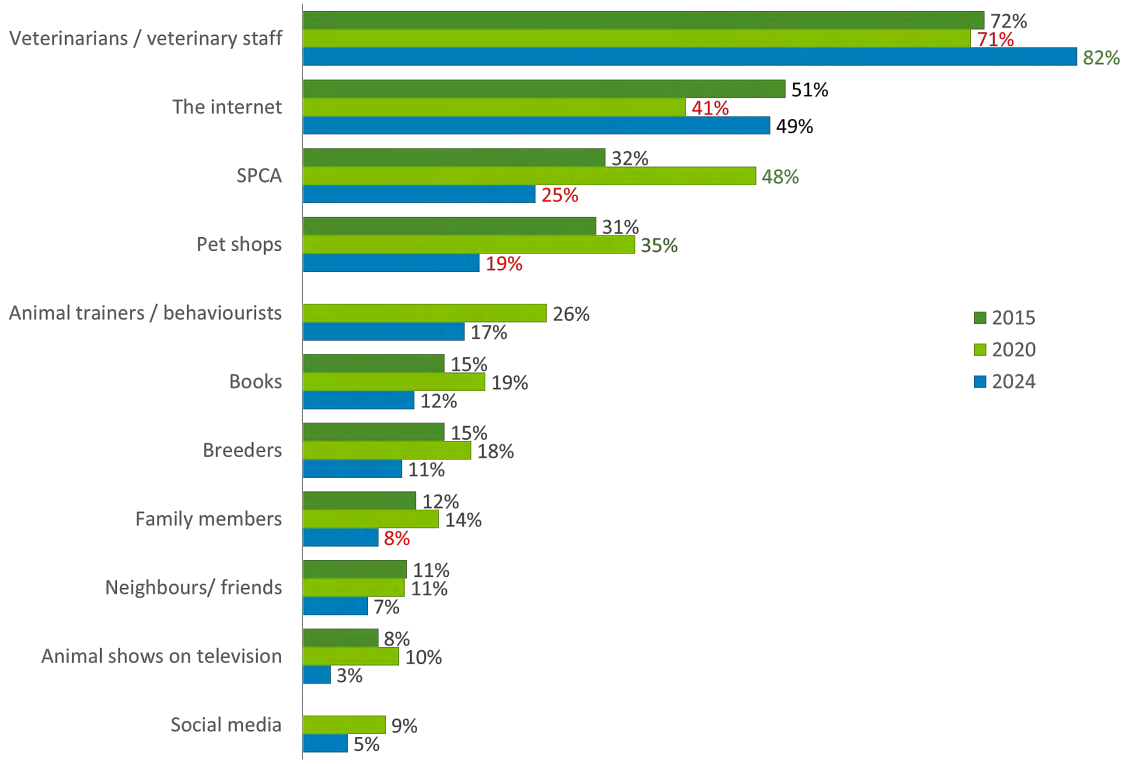



Base: Rabbit owners n=65

## 4.6 Trusted sources of information

People with companion animals were asked who or what they consider to be the best sources of information for companion animal related issues. Similar to previous years, veterinarians continued to be the most trusted by respondents (82%) and this has increased since 2020.

Respondents also mentioned the internet (49%), the SPCA (25%) and pet shops (19%). However, a significant decline in the proportion of respondents seeing the SPCA or pet shops as trusted sources of information occurred.

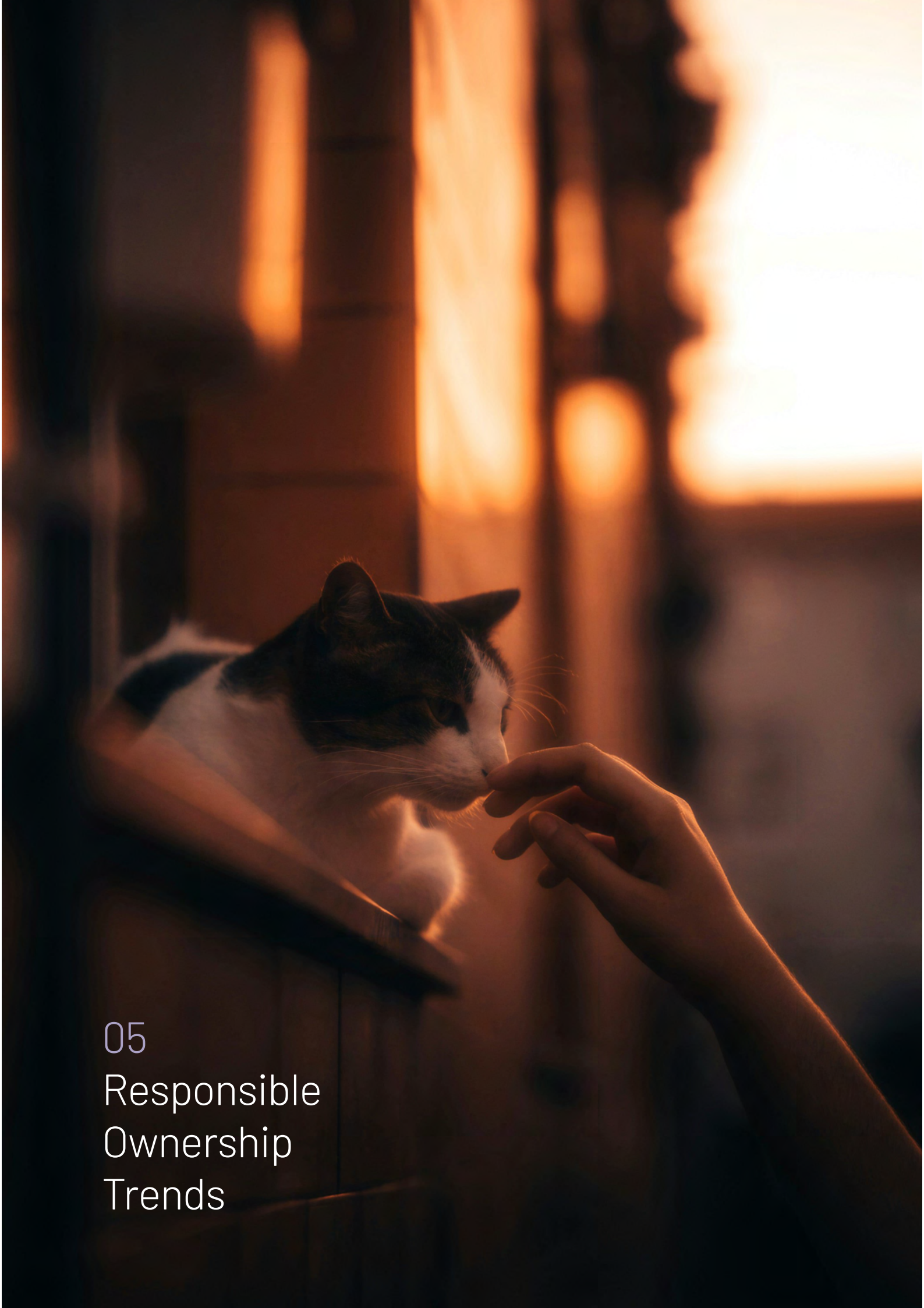



Base: All pet owners n=1,324
Statistically significant differences are denoted by red (lower) and green (higher); it means the difference between the groups has less than a 5% probability of occurring by chance or sampling error alone.

Some differences existed in how different age groups seek out information. The reliance on veterinarians increased with age (79% of the under 35 and 35-44-year age groups saw vets as a trusted source of information compared to 87% of over 65s).

The internet was less likely to be used by over 65 households (38%) and more trusted among younger households (54% of under 35s and 49% of 35-44-year age groups).

Under 35s reported using the SPCA as a source of information more (30%) compared to other age groups (23% of 35-44s down to 19% of over 65s).



# 05 Responsible Ownership Trends

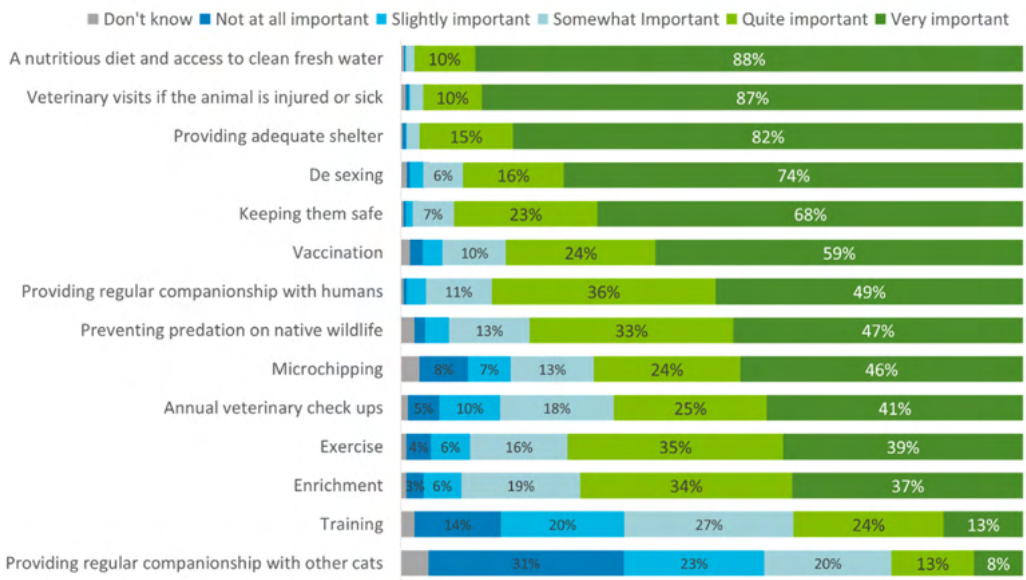
# 05
# Responsible Ownership Trends

## 5.1 Owner views on their animals' needs

There are several important components to responsible companion animal ownership. Respondents were asked to reflect on how important they felt various factors are for their animals.

### 5.1.1 Responsible cat ownership

For cats, the majority of owners (greater than 80%) agreed that it was very important to provide a nutritious diet, veterinary visits when the cat is ill or injured, and adequate shelter. Providing training and companionship of other cats were seen as least important by cat owners.




Base: All cat owners n=858



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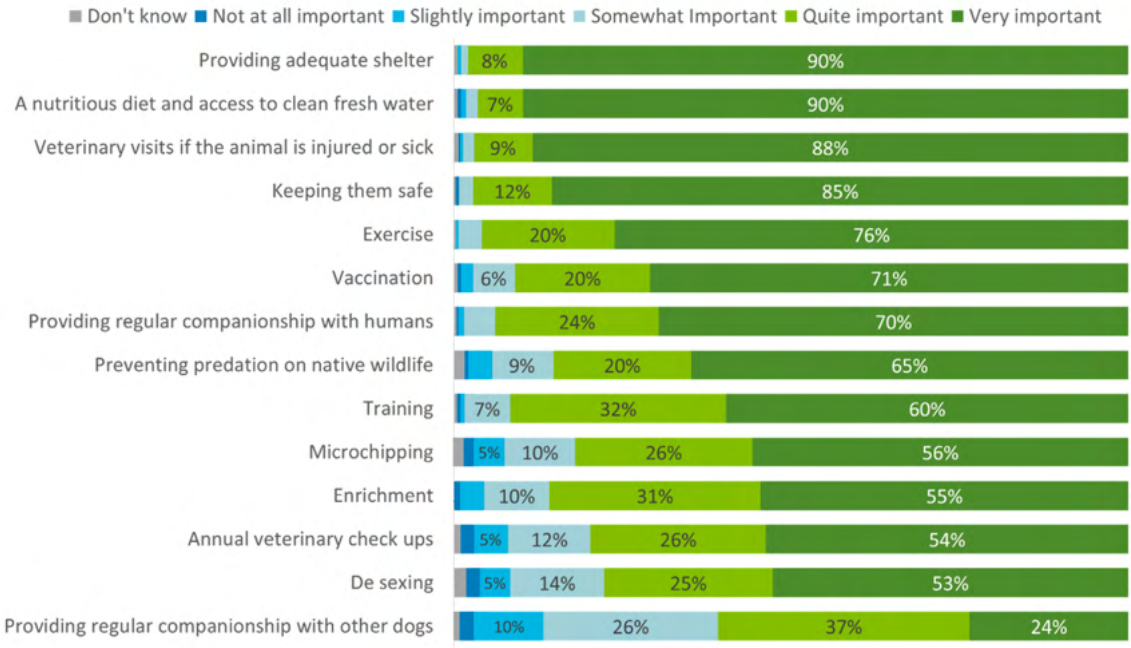
### 5.1.2 Responsible dog ownership

For dogs, the majority of owners (88% or greater) agreed that it was very important to provide adequate shelter, a nutritious diet and fresh drinking water, and vet visits when the dog is ill or injured. However, providing regular companionship with other dogs was seen by some owners as less important.



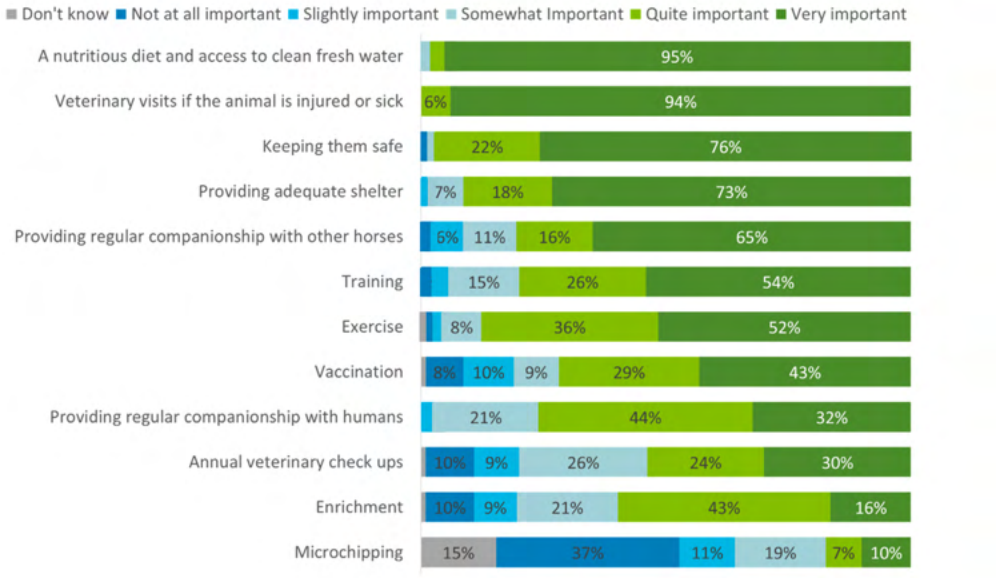

Base: All dog owners n=639

The largest points of difference between how owners viewed cats' and dogs' needs were seen in the importance of:

- Training (13% for cats vs. 60% for dogs)
- Exercise (39% for cats vs. 76% for dogs)
- Providing regular human companionship (49% for cats vs. 70% for dogs)

### 5.1.3 Responsible horse / pony ownership

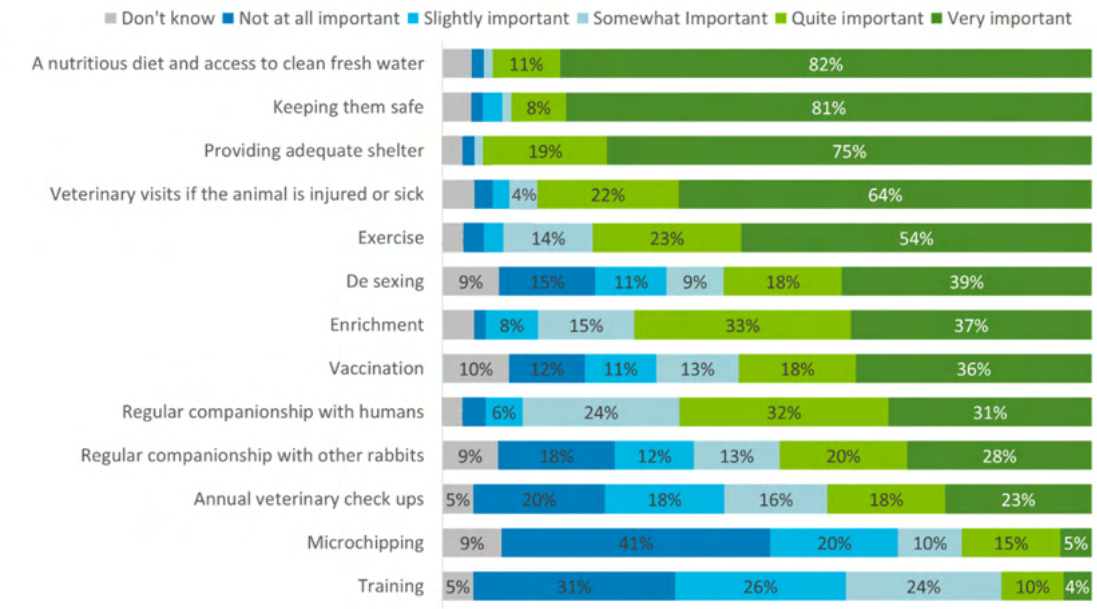
Horse / pony owners placed importance on health and nutrition. Most owners (greater than 90% of respondents) agreed that it was very important to provide a nutritious diet with access to clean water, and veterinary visits when their horse is ill or injured. Microchipping, enrichment and annual veterinary checkups were seen as less important.




Base: All horse / pony owners n=74 (2024 dataset)

### 5.1.4 Responsible rabbit ownership

Rabbit owners placed importance on nutrition and environment. Most owners (82%) agreed that it was very important to provide a nutritious diet with access to clean water. Keeping them safe (81%) and providing adequate shelter (75%) were also considered very important. Few owners reported feeling microchipping and training to be important.

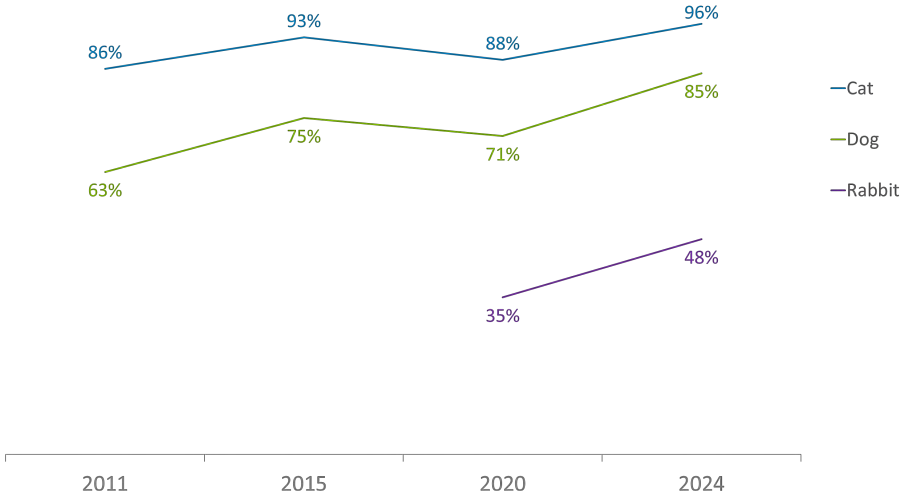



Base: All rabbit owners n=65 (2024 data and rabbit boost dataset)

# 5.2 Desexing

### 5.2.1 Trends of de-sexing

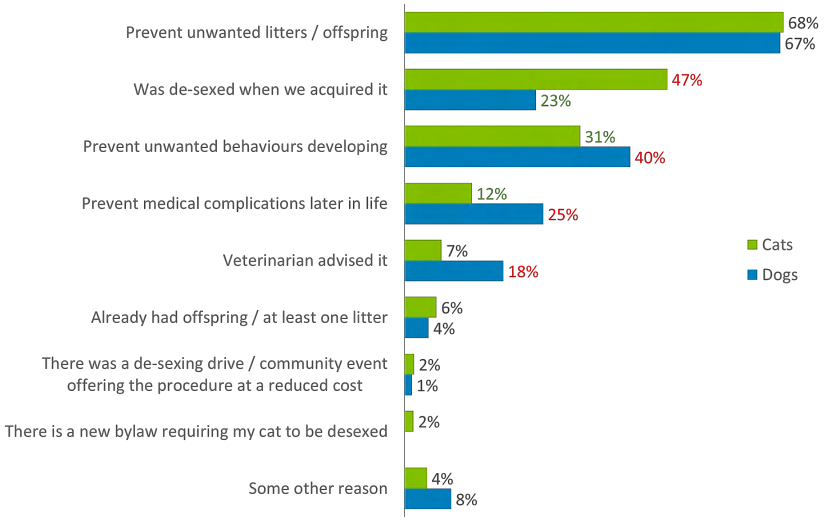
The reported incidence of de-sexing was very high among NZ's owned cat population at 96%. Within the dog population, de-sexing incidence increased to 85%, while desexing among the rabbit population has also increased to 48%.




Base: Individual pets: cats n=1,289, dogs n=848, rabbits n=106

### 5.2.1 Reasons for de-sexing

The key reason for desexing cited by respondents was to prevent unwanted litters (68% and 67% of cat and dog owners, respectively). Preventing unwanted behaviours was also mentioned by respondents (31% and 40% of cat and dog owners, respectively).




Base: Cat owners n=858, dog owners n=639
Statistically significant differences are denoted by red (lower) and green (higher); it means the difference between the groups has less than a 5% probability of occurring by chance or sampling error alone.

Almost a third (31%) of cats and a fifth of dogs (20%) who had not been desexed were acquired in the past year. When queried about their views on the importance of desexing, 69% of cat, and 43% of dog owners reported thinking it was very or quite important. For the minority of people whose dogs had not been desexed (14% of respondents), key reasons for not having done so were keeping them for breeding (27%), and not having had the time to do it yet (23%).

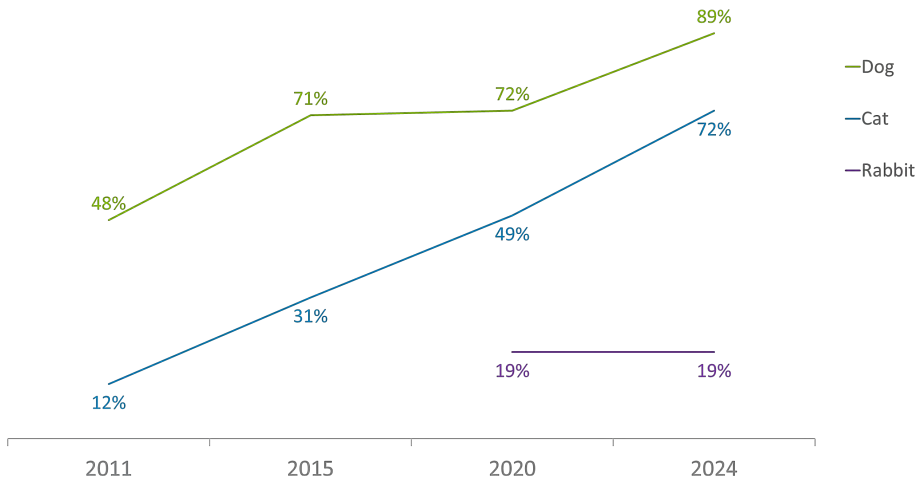
As most cat owners (96%) have de-sexed their cat(s) we do not have sufficient sample size to pull out reasons for not doing so among the small minority who have not desexed.

# 5.3 Microchipping and microchip registration

## 5.3.1 Trends in microchipping

Microchipping incidence has steadily increased among cats and dogs due in part to compulsory microchipping, SPCA policies, and perceived importance of microchipping among cat and dog owners in New Zealand.

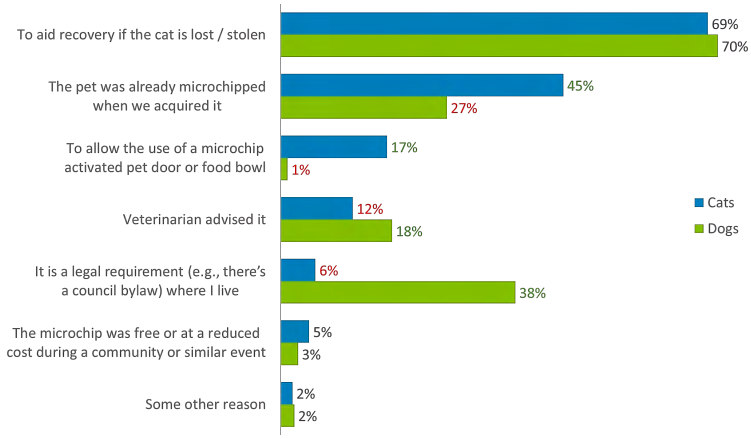
Within the NZ owned cat population, reported microchipping has increased over the past decade, up to 72% in 2024. Among the dog population, microchipping has also increased from 72% in 2020 to 89% in 2024. Reported microchipping among the rabbit population remains unchanged.




Base: Individual pets: cats n=1,289, dogs n=848, rabbits n=106

## 5.3.2 Reasons for microchipping

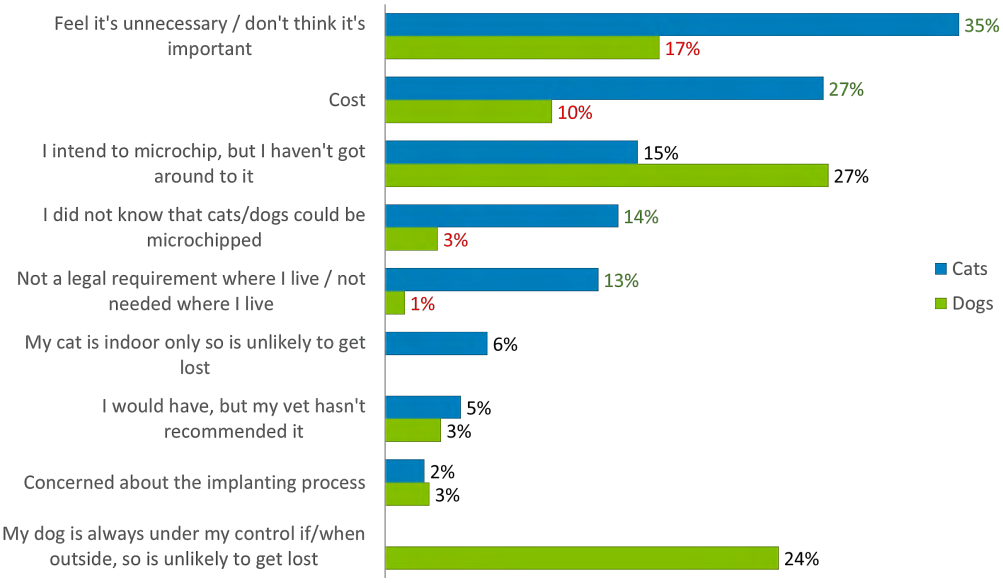
The main reason reported for microchipping was to aid in the recovery of their cat or dog if it is lost or stolen (69% of cat owners and 70% of dog owners). The second most common reason for dog owners was the legal requirement of microchipping (38% of respondents), while for cat owners it was that the cat was already microchipped when they acquired it (45%). While cat owners reported using microchips to allow for technologies such as doors or bowls (17%), this was not commonly reported by dog owners (1%).




Base: Cat owners with microchipped cats: n=642, dog owners with microchipped dogs: n=582
Statistically significant differences are denoted by red (lower) and green (higher); it means the difference between the groups has less than a 5% probability of occurring by chance or sampling error alone.

### 5.3.3 Barriers to microchipping

While 7% of cat owners were not sure if their cats were microchipped, 22% confirmed their cats were not. For these people, the main barrier to microchipping cats was the perception that it was not necessary (35%), followed by the perceived cost (27%).

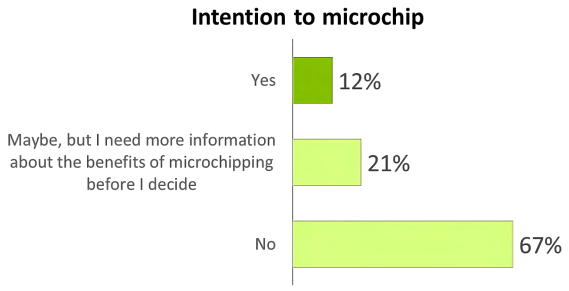



Base: Cat owners with un-microchipped cats: n=203, dog owners with un-microchipped dogs: n=44
Statistically significant differences are denoted by red and green font; it means the difference between the groups has less than a 5% probability of occurring by chance or sampling error alone.

The barriers reported by cat owners align with reported importance of microchipping; 83% of owners with microchipped cats thought microchipping was very or quite important, while 31% of owners with un-microchipped cats indicated this. 7% of dogs were not microchipped. The most common barrier reported by their owners was not having had the time yet to do so (27%) and thinking that losing the dog was unlikely since they always had it under their control (24%).

### 5.3.4 Intention to microchip

Among cat owners who had not microchipped their cat (22% of respondents), only 12% of these people indicated an intention to do so in the future.




Base: Cat owners with un-microchipped cats n=203

Those who did not plan to microchip their cat(s) were asked about what made them hesitant; 22% were concerned about the reaction of their cat to implanting, 15% had privacy concerns, and 14% were concerned about the age of their cat. Other less common hesitations included long term health (9%) and infection concerns (7%), drifting of the microchip (9%), and perceptions of the chips containing location/tracking abilities (5%). However, many had no concerns; 31% did not see the need / thought it was unnecessary.

### 5.3.5 Horse microchipping

Microchipping was noted for 26% of the horses / ponies discussed by respondents. The key reasons for not microchipping were feeling that it was not important (46% of respondents), a lack of breed requirement (37% of respondents), purchasing the horse without a microchip (28% of respondents), and a lack of knowledge that horses could be microchipped (14% of respondents).

Of those owners with horses that had not been microchipped, only 2% confirmed intent to do so in the future. However, 25% of owners of un-microchipped horses said they might microchip if they knew more about the benefits of doing so. The remainder (73%) indicated they had no intention of microchipping; however, offering discounted microchipping opportunities swayed 13% of these respondents in favour of microchipping, and a further 29% said they may consider it provided they had more information about the benefits.

### 5.3.4 Rabbit microchipping

Microchipping among the rabbit population is small, only 19% of the rabbits discussed by respondents are currently microchipped. The key reasons for not microchipping were a lack of awareness that rabbits could be microchipped (32% of respondents), feeling that it was not important (30% of respondents), and the rabbit being indoors so unlikely to get lost (21% of respondents).

Of those owners with rabbits that had not been microchipped, none indicated intent to do so in the future. However, 18% said they might microchip if they knew more about the benefits of doing so.

## 5.4 Trends of microchipping registration

To repatriate a companion animal, it is vital that their microchip is registered with a national database. In NZ, dogs may be registered on the National Dog Database and/or the NZCAR (New Zealand Companion Animal Register). For cats and all other companion species, the NZCAR is currently the only national lost and found microchip register available.

Since it was founded in September 2007 up to 1 April 2024, more than 1.3 million companion animals[1] had been registered on the NZCAR using their unique microchip identification number (this value includes animals now deceased). Since 2020, after accounting for deceased animals, the number of live animals registered on the NZCAR has increased by approximately 415,000.

There appears to be confusion among companion animal owners as to whether their microchipped animal is registered or not. One fifth (21%) of cat owners with microchipped cat(s) were unsure, and only 39% of dog owners with microchipped dog(s) thought the microchip had been registered on the NZCAR. Comparatively 91% of dog owners with microchipped dogs thought their microchip was registered with their local council. It highlights that there is likely confusion between the NZCAR and the National Dog Database.

Using the owner reported microchipping incidence, registration on the NZCAR incidence, and the estimated 2024 cat (1,261,000) and dog (830,000) populations, it is possible to roughly compare perceived registration of animals on the NZCAR and actual numbers.

The number of microchipped and registered with NZCAR cats would be approximately 680,000, which aligns reasonably with 2024 NZCAR registration (663,157). However, for dogs this would be an estimated 288,000 microchipped and NZCAR registered dogs, which falls far short of the 524,000 dogs currently registered on the NZCAR. This reinforces the higher level of confusion among dog owners regarding the registration of microchips.

[1] As of the publication date of this report (February 2025) the registration number had just surpassed 1,400,000.

| Animals with registered microchips on the NZCAR* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **2015** | **2020** | **2024** |
| Cat | 208,156 | 441,827 | 663,157 |
| Dog | 156,197 | 334,743 | 524,719 |
| Rabbit | 2,590 | 6,381 | 9,091 |
| Horse | 144 | 279 | 721 |
| Rodent | 18 | 171 | 445 |
| Guinea Pig** | - | - | 265 |
| Bird | 38 | 85 | 174 |
| Goat | 18 | 44 | 76 |
| Other | 0 | 1 | 70 |
| Donkey | 4 | 19 | 61 |
| Lizard | 7 | 12 | 33 |
| Cattle | 1 | 1 | 28 |
| Turtle | 15 | 15 | 20 |
| Ferret | 9 | 12 | 18 |
| Tortoise | 6 | 10 | 18 |
| Camelid | 0 | 3 | 16 |
| Porcine | 3 | 10 | 13 |
| Sheep | 0 | 7 | 8 |
| Fish | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| **Total Registered** | **367,209** | **783,623** | **1,198,936** |

* These values differ from previously printed numbers in the 2015 and 2020 reports; these have been standardised to be up to 1 April of the respective year and corrected for removal of deceased animals.

** Prior to 2022, guinea pigs were grouped under the species 'rodent'.

# 6.0 Companion Animal Health

# 6.0
# Companion Animal Health

## 6.1 Veterinarian visits

Dog owners were more likely to have taken their dog to the vet (85%) in the past year and more likely to have taken their dog for an annual health checkup (58%) compared to other species.

Horses / ponies (18%) and rabbits (20%) were the least likely to have been taken to a vet for an annual checkup, and rabbits were also least likely to have visited the vet in the past 12 months for any reason.

Rabbit owners were more likely to report that their rabbit(s) have no health conditions while approximately half of dog owners (47%) and half of horse / pony owners (47%) reported their animal having no health conditions.

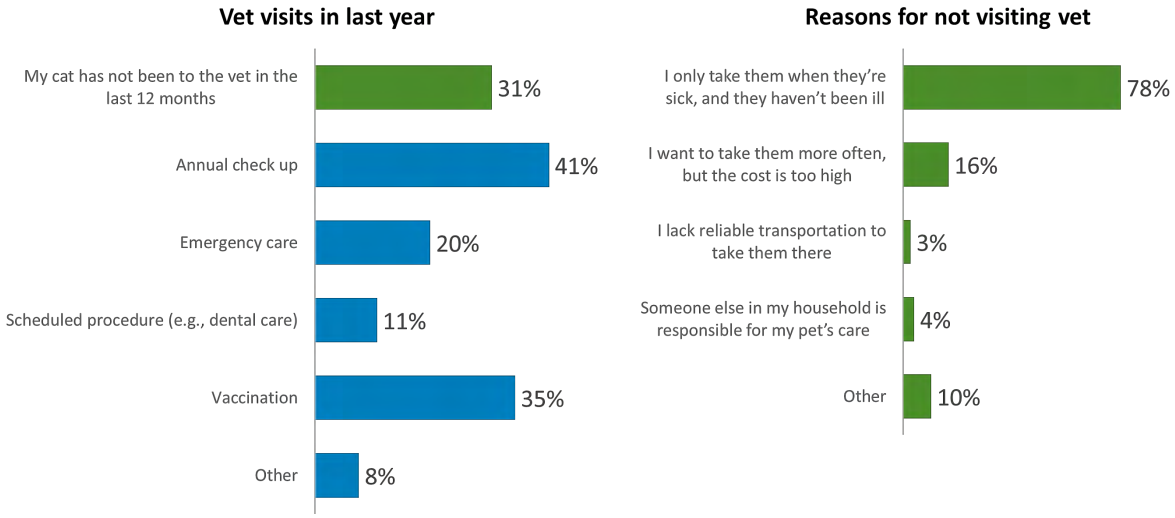
| | Cat | Dog | Horse / Pony | Rabbit |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Visited vet in the past year | 69% | 85% | 60% | 36% |
| Visited for annual check-up | 41% | 58% | 18% | 20% |
| Reported as having no health conditions | 58% | 47% | 48% | 78% |
| *Base size (pet owners)* | *858* | *639* | *74* | *65* |

Statistically significant differences are denoted by red (lower) and green (higher); it means the difference between the groups has less than a 5% probability of occurring by chance or sampling error alone.

### 6.1.1 Vet visits among cat owners

Just over two thirds (69%) of cat owners reported having taken their cat(s) to the vet in the past year; 41% of owners had done so for an annual check-up.

Among those who had not been to a vet, the main reason was that the owner reported only taking them when they were sick (i.e. the owner has not perceived a need to visit).



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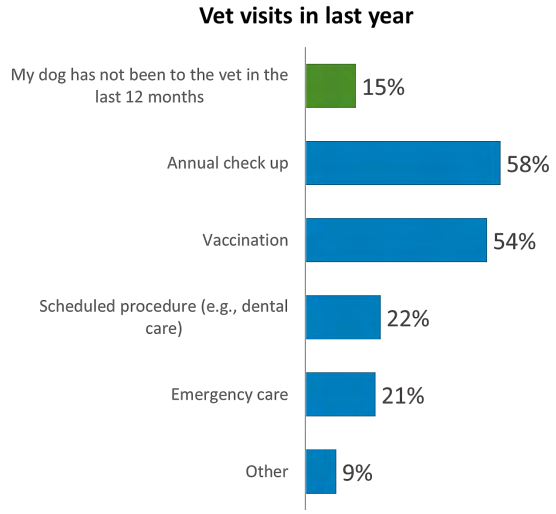
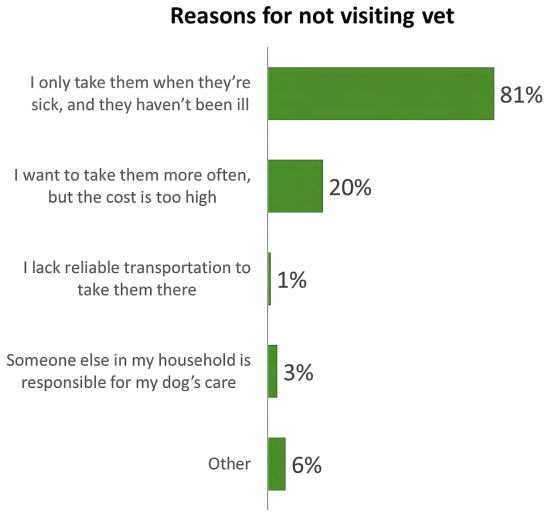
### 6.1.2 Vet visits among dog owners

Most dog owners have visited a vet in the past year; 58% went for an annual checkup and 54% went for a vaccination.

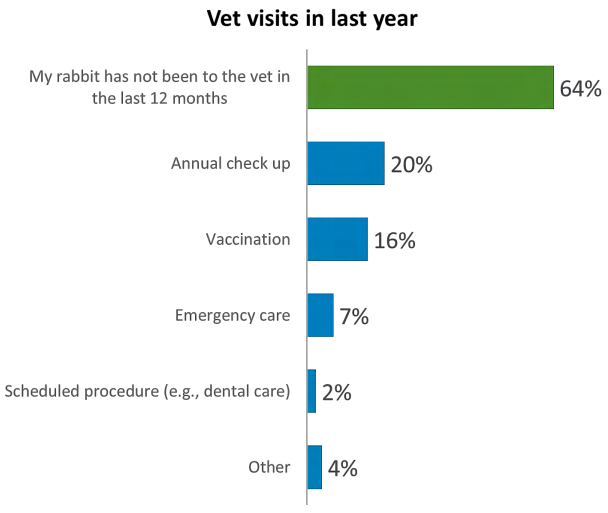
Among those that had not been to a vet, the main reason was that the owner reported only taking them when they were sick (i.e. the owner had not perceived a need to visit).

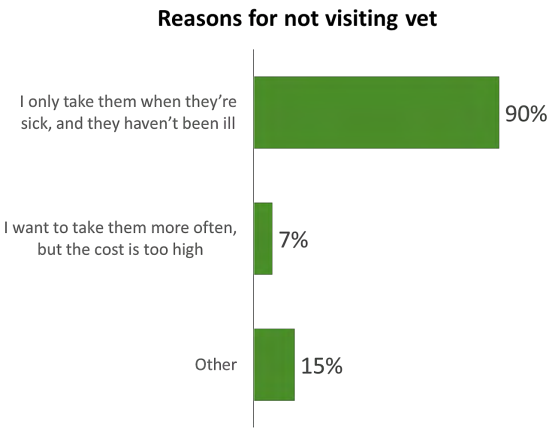



### 6.1.3 Vet visits among rabbit owners

The majority (64%) of rabbit owners have not visited a vet in the past year. Only 20% of rabbit owners have taken their rabbit in for an annual checkup. As with dogs and cats, the primary reason for rabbits not visiting the vet was that the owner had not perceived a need for a visit (90% of rabbits with no recent vet visit).



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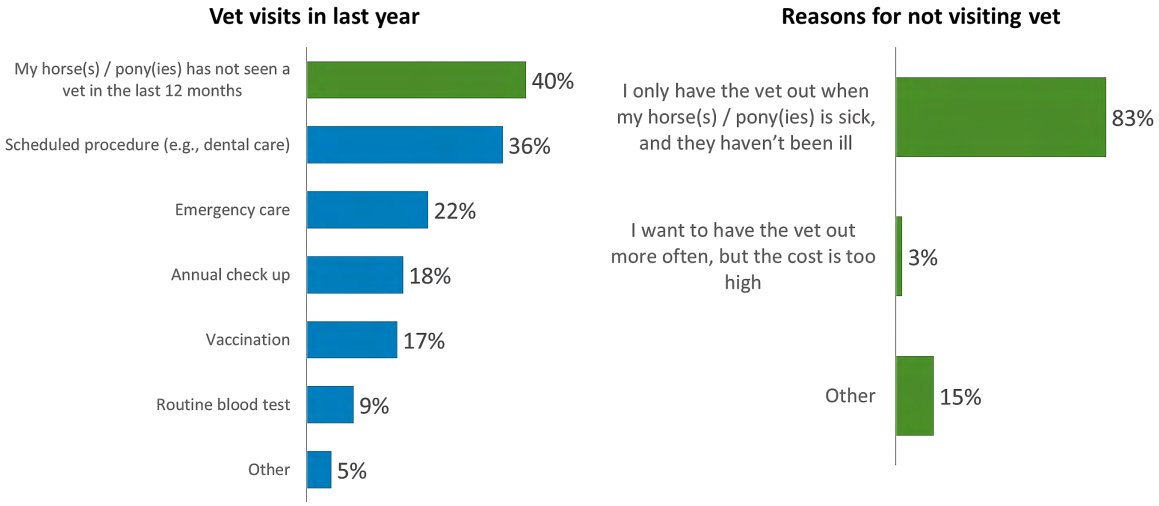
### 6.1.4 Vet visits among horse / pony owners

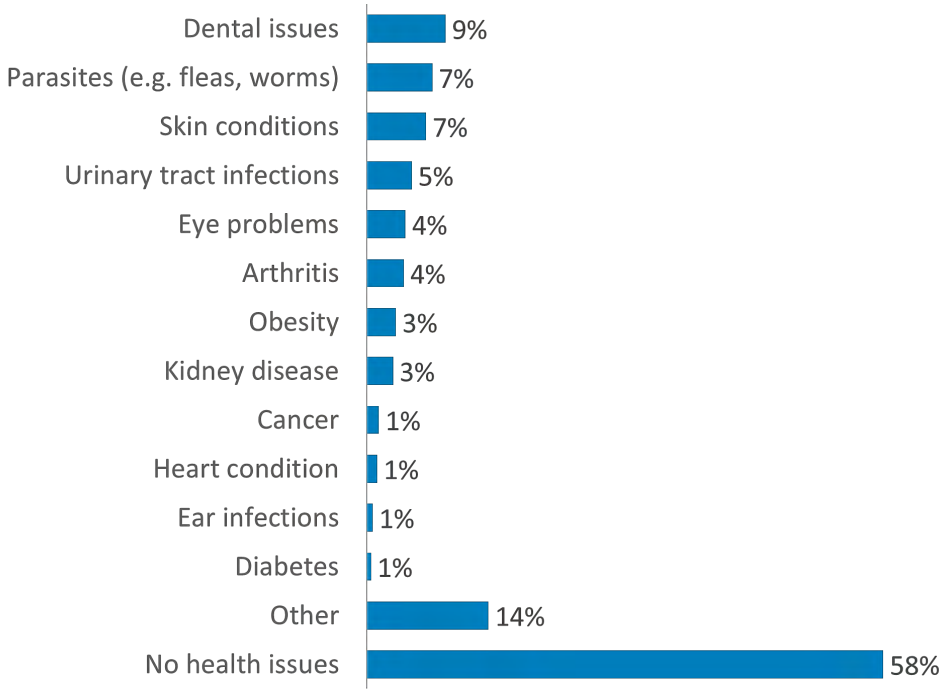
40% of horse / pony owners had not been seen by a vet in the last year, mainly because owners reported only arranging for a vet visit when their horse / pony is sick. Of the horses /ponies that had seen a vet, the main reason was for a scheduled procedure.




## 6.2 Health conditions

### 6.2.1 Common health conditions among cats

Over half of cat owners (58%) reported that their cat(s) had had no health issues. Among those who have had an issue, dental issues, followed by parasites and skin conditions were the most common.



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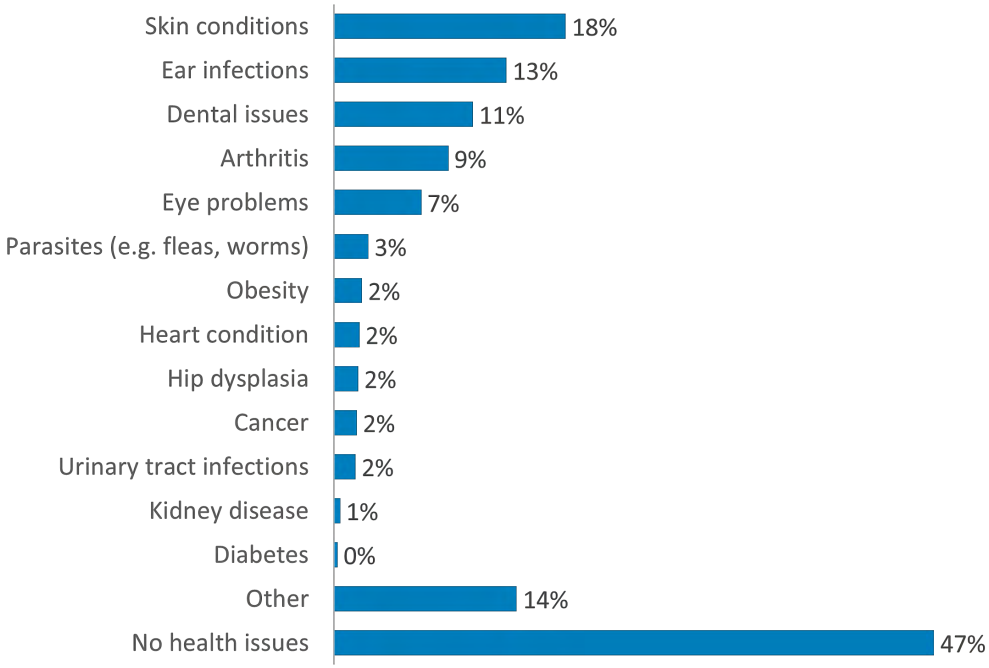
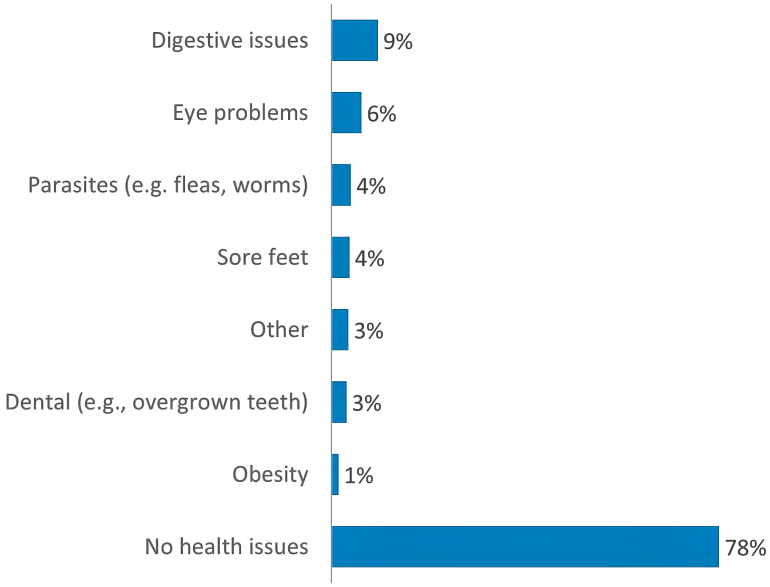
### 6.2.2 Common health conditions among dogs

Almost half of dog owners (47%) reported that their dog(s) had no health issues. Among those who have had an issue, skin conditions, followed by ear infections and dental issues were the most common.



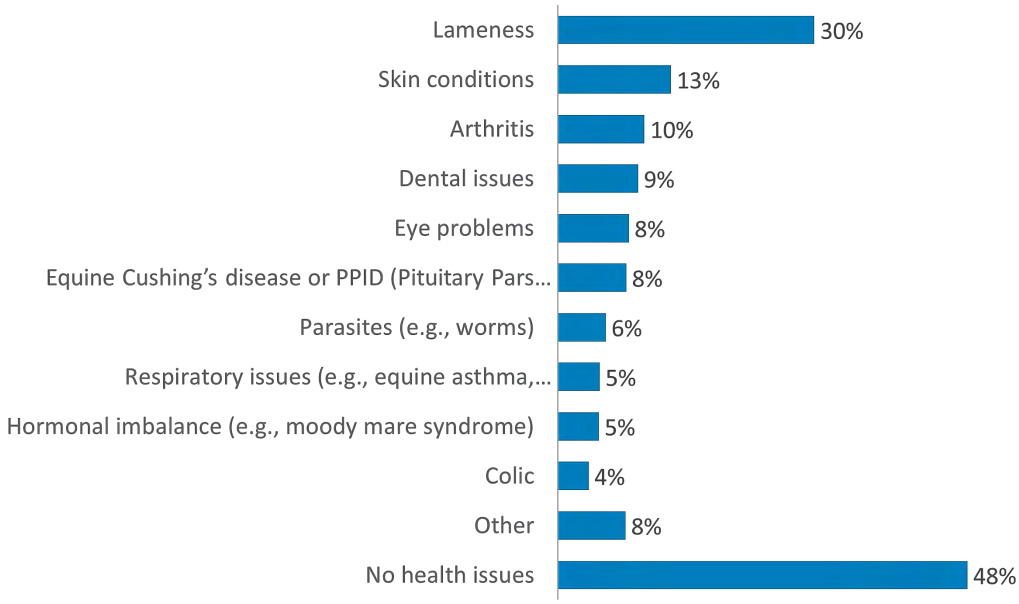

### 6.2.3 Common health conditions among rabbits

Most rabbit owners (78%) reported that their rabbit(s) had no health issues. Among those who have had an issue, digestive issues, followed by eye problems and parasites were the most common.



### 6.2.4 Common health conditions among horses

Almost half of horse / pony owners (48%) stated that their animals had no health issues. Among those who have had an issue, lameness was the most common.



# 7.0
# Appendix

# 7.0 Appendix

## 7.1 Sample breakdown

A multi cell quota design was used with data weighted to reflect New Zealand's population at each of the following:

| | | Auckland | Wellington | Rest of North Island | South Island |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | Under 35 | 6.1% | 1.9% | 4.8% | 4.0% |
| | 35-44 | 2.7% | 1.0% | 2.3% | 1.7% |
| | 45-54 | 2.7% | 1.0% | 2.5% | 2.1% |
| | 55-64 | 2.1% | 0.8% | 2.5% | 1.9% |
| | 65+ | 2.3% | 1.0% | 3.2% | 2.3% |
| Female | Under 35 | 6.1% | 1.9% | 4.8% | 3.8% |
| | 35-44 | 2.9% | 1.0% | 2.3% | 2.1% |
| | 45-54 | 2.9% | 1.0% | 2.7% | 2.1% |
| | 55-64 | 2.3% | 1.0% | 2.7% | 1.9% |
| | 65+ | 2.7% | 1.1% | 3.6% | 2.7% |

The demographic breakdown of the 2,058 respondents was as follows:

| Age | |
|---|---|
| Under 35 | 424 |
| 35-44 | 350 |
| 45-54 | 420 |
| 55-64 | 401 |
| 65+ | 463 |
| **TOTAL** | **2,058** |

| Region | |
|---|---|
| Auckland | 627 |
| Wellington | 238 |
| Canterbury | 295 |
| Rest of North Island | 666 |
| Rest of South Island | 232 |
| **TOTAL** | **2,058** |

| Gender | |
|---|---|
| Male | 888 |
| Female | 1170 |
| **TOTAL** | **2,058** |

The following table shows the breakdown of the 2,058 respondents by current companion animal ownership.

| Animal Type | Base size |
|---|---|
| Dog | 639 |
| Cat | 858 |
| Fish | 113 |
| Horse / Pony | 74 |
| Rabbit* | 26 |
| Other small mammal *(e.g. rat, mouse, guinea pig)* | 12 |
| Reptile | 9 |
| Donkey | 3 |
| Goat | 12 |
| Bird *(excluding fowl)* | 52 |
| Fowl *(e.g. chicken, duck, pigeon, goose)* | 123 |
| **Share home with ANY companion animal type** | **1,324** |
| **Do NOT share home with a companion animal** | **734** |
| **TOTAL** | **2,058** |

* Excludes additional 39 rabbit owners captured during follow-up rabbit boost.

For some species we asked the number of animals in the household, and then asked questions (e.g. microchipping, desexing) about each animal. The following table shows the number of individual cats, dogs, horses / ponies and rabbits that respondents answered questions about.

| | Number of owners in sample | Number of animals in sample |
|---|---|---|
| Dog | 639 | 850 |
| Cat | 858 | 1,289 |
| Horse / Pony | 74 | 176 |
| Rabbit* | 65 | 106 |

*Includes the additional 39 rabbit owners captured during follow-up rabbit boost.

# 8.0
# About CANZ

# 8.0
# About CANZ

Companion Animals New Zealand is a charity dedicated to making Aotearoa a global leader in companion animal welfare. We strive for a world where every companion animal enjoys the Good Life they deserve.

Our evidence-based work aims to facilitate a harmonious relationship between companion animals, people and the environment. As a charitable trust, all our activities are carried out on behalf of companion animals, serving as their collective voice in New Zealand.

We have a unique emphasis on positive welfare through a distinctly New Zealand lens, using data from our own sources to provide timely insights into how the companion animal landscape is evolving in Aotearoa.

## 8.1 Three main work areas

- **RESEARCH AND EDUCATION**
  We create change programmes to empower companion animal guardians in providing exceptional care, beyond basic needs. By gathering data and addressing knowledge gaps, we develop effective strategies to ensure animals live a Good Life.
- **ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMMES**
  We work with local and international organisations to host conferences, webinars, and community welfare programmes like EQuiChip®. We also support desexing and microchipping work in shelters through a dedicated Trust.
- **NZ COMPANION ANIMAL REGISTER**
  Our NZCAR has more than 1.4 million total registrations. It is currently connecting over 1.2 million companion animals with their guardians through a national database accessible to 950+ Approved Users like vet clinics and rescues, ensuring the safe return of lost pets. We use this platform to gather insights into the state of New Zealand's companion animals.

## 8.2 Our history

In 1990, the Auckland SPCA initiated a forum that brought together various animal welfare groups and officials. This forum, known as the 'Companion Animal Workshop,' evolved into a world-class conference focused on meaningful welfare discussions. Recognising the need for more active pursuit of resolutions, the New Zealand Companion Animal Council (now Companion Animals New Zealand) was established in February 1996 to promote a harmonious relationship between companion animals, people, and the environment. CANZ is a respected national organisation representing a variety of animal welfare groups, including key stakeholders like SPCA, NZVA, Dogs NZ, New Zealand Cat Fancy, NZVNA, and NZIAM.

Companion Animals NZ
PUBLICATIONS