



### Animal welfare and management

Figure 1 – Pet ownership in Hong Kong

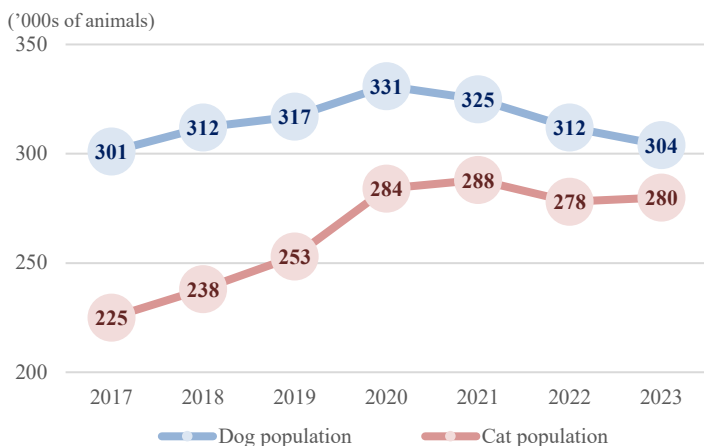


Figure 2 – Trends in dog and cat surrenders and rehoming rate

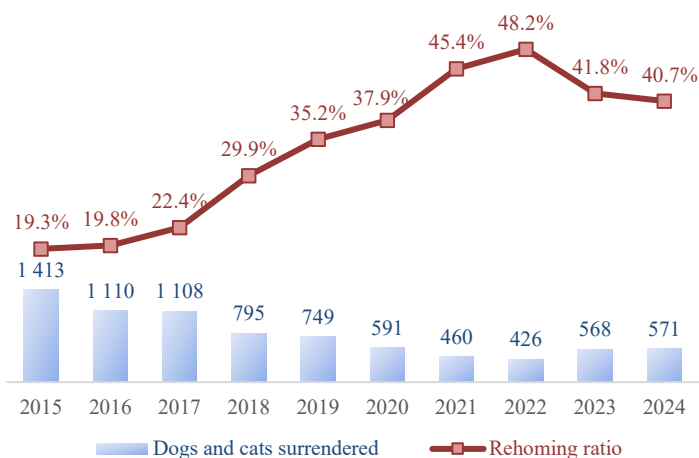
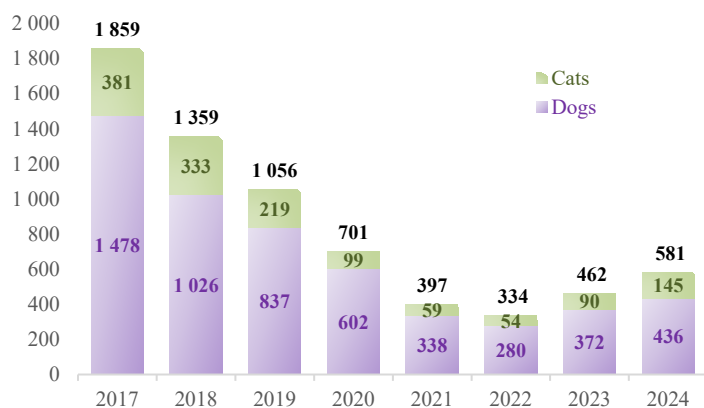


Figure 3 – Number of dogs and cats euthanized

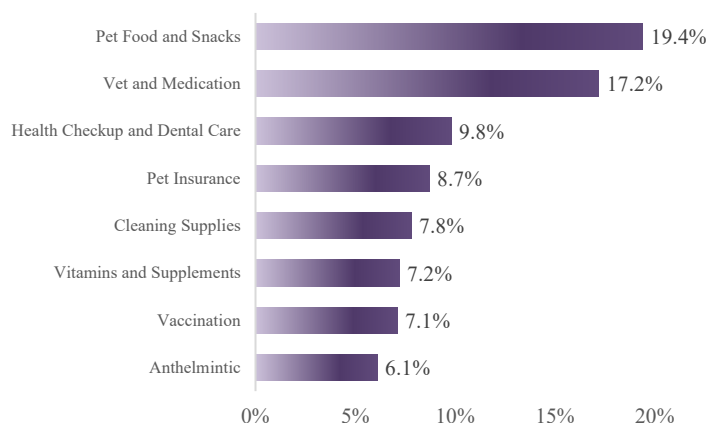


### Highlights

- Despite its high population density, Hong Kong has established a pet-keeping culture that favours particularly cats and dogs. The pet animal population grew markedly during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, when social isolation and increased home time prompted many people to adopt “pandemic pets” for companionship (Figure 1). Some were reportedly first-time pet owners who had previously been constrained by work and/or travel commitments. However, as post-pandemic routines resumed normality with less time spent at home, the numbers of pet dogs and cats eased back to 304 000 and 280 000 in 2023 respectively.
- While pet ownership remains popular in Hong Kong, cases of animal abuse and neglect persist. Since the 2010s, the Government has stepped up efforts to promote “responsible pet ownership” and proper care of animals, which helped reduce the number of dogs and cats surrendered from 1 413 in 2015 to 426 in 2022 and improve their rehoming rate from 19.3% to 48.2% over the period (Figure 2). However, this positive trend reversed after the end of the pandemic. In both 2023 and 2024, animal surrender cases rebounded while the rehoming rate declined.
- In response to animal surrenders, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (“AFCD”) operates four animal management centres that arrange the transfer of surrendered animals to animal welfare organizations for public adoption. Euthanasia is considered only when animals are deemed unsuitable for adoption (e.g. poor health or aggressive temperament). According to AFCD, many dogs and cats it recently received had pre-existing health issues. The rising trend of surrendered animals with health conditions has led to increased cases of euthanasia, with the number of dogs and cats euthanized rising by 74% from 334 in 2022 to 581 in 2024 (Figure 3).

## Animal welfare and management (cont'd)

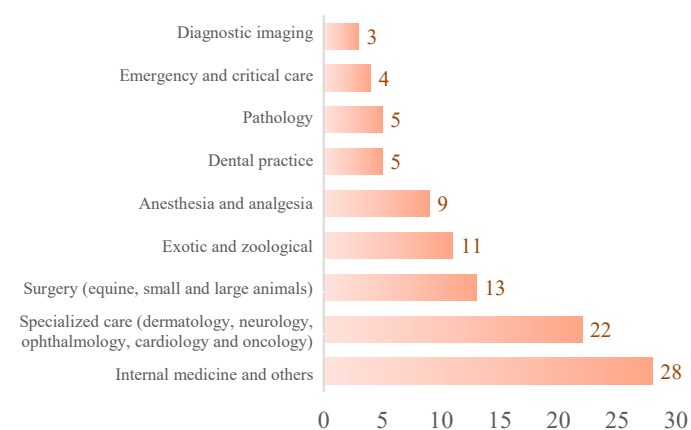
**Figure 4 – Average share of major pet expenditure, 2024**



**Figure 5 – Number of veterinary establishments and registered surgeons**



**Figure 6 – Availability of veterinary specialists in Hong Kong**



## Highlights

- The recent rising trend in pet abandonment is also conceivably due to high veterinary costs which pet owners are either unwilling or unable to afford. For responsible pet owners, veterinary expenses can represent a substantial financial commitment in their pet ownership. A 2024 survey conducted by a pet insurer revealed that 87% of surveyed pet owners had sought veterinary care, with “vet and medication” constituting the second-highest pet expenditure at 17.2% of total, while “health checkup and dental care” was the third largest expenditure item taking up 9.8% (Figure 4).
- For basic consultations and medications, a veterinary fee of a thousand dollars is reportedly not uncommon. While veterinary service prices of vet practices are market-determined, the Consumer Council raised concerns in 2022 over increasing complaints about fee disputes, largely regarding fee transparency and refund arrangements. The business potential of the pet industry has spurred the opening of many new animal clinics in recent years, with total number of clinics increasing by 50% compared to just a 33.3% growth for the veterinary workforce between 2018 and 2024 (Figure 5). This disparity has reportedly fuelled staff poaching among clinics, with the resulting higher manpower costs being passed on to pet owners through increased service charges.
- Specifically for specialized treatment involving surgery or other complex procedure, veterinary fees could run into tens of thousands or more. The high costs also stem from the limited pool of local veterinary specialists, which totalled only 100 as at 2024. The shortages are especially acute in several fields, with fewer than 10 specialists each in diagnostic imaging, emergency and critical care, pathology, dental practice, and anesthesia and analgesia (Figure 6).

Data source: Latest figures from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong, Census and Statistics Department, Euromonitor International and OneDegree.

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