

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **MORE THAN HALF OF STRAY DOGS REUNITED WITH OWNERS Dogs Trust national survey highlights microchipping success**

An encouraging 51% of stray dogs picked up by Local Authorities in the UK were reunited with their owners according to the 2010 Dogs Trust Stray Dog Survey. This compares with 42% last year and is only the second time the figure has gone through the 50% barrier since survey records began in 1997.

Where the method used to return stray dogs was identified, the proportion of dogs returned through microchipping was 35% – up from 31% last year.

Dogs Trust is repeating the call for the introduction of a compulsory microchipping system for all dogs in the UK. It believes this will help reunite even more owners with their lost pets, trace abandoned pets back to irresponsible owners and ultimately reduce the number of healthy dogs unnecessarily put to sleep in the UK.

The annual Stray Dog Survey, conducted by GfK NOP on behalf of Dogs Trust, shows an overall increase in instances of straying from 107,228 to 121,693. However, taking into account the number of dogs reclaimed or returned to owner (45,329 in 2009 and 61,908 in 2010) we can estimate that this year the number of dogs actually abandoned (approximately 59,785) as opposed to being wanted pets that simply strayed has fallen by 3%.

There has been a considerable decline in the number of dogs being put to sleep by Local Authorities due to ill health, aggression (under the Dangerous Dogs Act) or simply for want of a home. Down from 9,310 in last year's survey to 6,404 this year. Dogs Trust is delighted at the progress Local Authorities have made in bringing down these numbers and their efforts in rehoming and returning so many dogs to their owners.

Dogs Trust Chief Executive Clarissa Baldwin says:

“Dogs Trust is encouraged to see that although the instances of straying in the UK has increased in the last two years, the percentage of these dogs being reunited with their owners has increased and, more importantly, the numbers being put to sleep has fallen drastically.

“We are delighted to see that microchipping is having a serious impact on the stray dog situation in the UK. Dogs Trust runs subsidised microchipping campaigns across the country and in particular those areas with the biggest stray dog problems. A compulsory microchipping system would undoubtedly improve the situation further.”

#### **The introduction of compulsory microchipping would:**

- Enable lost or straying dogs to be reunited promptly with their owners – meaning fewer dogs will be put to sleep at council pounds
- Permanently identify a dog in such a way that is virtually impossible to alter or remove - a clear advantage for dogs that are stolen
- Enable clear identification of the dog's owner when prosecution is being considered for dog thieves and antisocial behaviour
- Significantly decrease the workload of all those dealing with stray dogs
- Reduce kennelling costs for Local Authorities and save time
- Allow puppies bred illegally or inappropriately on puppy farms to be traced to their source

Dogs Trust invests approximately £5m each year in neutering, microchipping and education programmes in the worst affected areas of the UK - Northern Ireland, North West England, North East England and Wales. Since the campaigns began in 1999, over 307,000 dogs have been neutered and 228,500 have been microchipped through Dogs Trust.

Dogs Trust is the UK's largest dog welfare charity and cares for over 16,000 dogs a year through its network of 17 rehoming centres. Dogs Trust never destroys a healthy dog in its care.

**-ENDS-**

### **Notes to editors**

Responsible dog owners can get their pet chipped at their local vets for an average cost of £20-£30. Dogs Trust will microchip all dogs by appointment at any of their rehoming centres for a reduced cost of £10 and £5 for those on means tested benefits.

***Dogs Trust has a non destruction policy, we never destroy a healthy dog.***

**Please contact the Dogs Trust Press Office for full survey results, images, filming requests, details of the Dogs Trust Rehoming Centres across the UK and general information on dogs.**

### **CASE STUDIES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST**

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All figures are estimates based on an assumption that responding authorities are representative of authorities as a whole. Results relate to the period 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010. The 2010 survey was produced by GfK NOP who mailed questionnaires to all 378 local authorities in the UK. 337 LAs responded to the survey and results were then weighted to represent the 378 authorities. Northern Ireland figures were sourced from DARD. There was an overall response rate of 83%.

***Dogs Trust is working towards the day when all dogs can enjoy a happy life, free from the threat of unnecessary destruction.***