



Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt  
Chancellor of the Exchequer  
His Majesty's Treasury  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

27<sup>th</sup> April 2023

Dear Chancellor,

We are writing to you as seven of the leading animal welfare charities and organisations in the United Kingdom to express our disappointment that urgently needed support for pet owners was not included in the Spring Budget and to highlight the ongoing pressures many owners are facing.

As a pet owner yourself you will be aware of the vital role pets play in families, however the situation facing many pet owners is bleak. Costs related to owning a pet including food and veterinary services have substantially increased as a result of inflation, compounded by the rising costs in all aspects of our lives.

As the cost-of-living pressures increase, we are seeing more and more people in the UK forced to turn to food banks to feed themselves and their families. This includes pet-owning families, where many are agonisingly being forced to decide between feeding themselves or their pets. Many of our organisations have been supporting local food banks to help pets directly in our communities, as there is a real current need.

Research by the RSPCA found that 19% of pet owners were worried about affording to feed their pet and 28% worried about being able to properly care for their pet. A Dogs Trust survey found 43% of the public saying they would welcome reduced costs for pet food.

Dogs Trust, RSPCA, Cats Protection and Battersea Dogs & Cats Home have partnered with Fareshare, the UK's largest surplus food redistributor, Mars Petcare, Pets at Home, Lily's Kitchen and UK Pet Food to form the National Pet Food Partnership; providing targeted support for pet owners by distributing pet food to a network of foodbanks across the country. By working together, we can try and keep as many much-loved pets with their families as possible and prevent charity sector shelters from becoming overwhelmed.

This support alone is not enough.

There is a real threat to animal rescue charities of a wave of impending animal relinquishment, with less homes available for the waiting animals affected. As cost-of-living pressures deepen, we urgently need Government support to ensure that pets can stay with loving families where they belong. From research by Dogs Trust, 77% told us that they have seen the cost of pet food rise, with 43% saying the



same for veterinary care. Most worryingly of all, 10% have delayed seeking veterinary treatment due to the cost.

**To address these issues head-on, we are therefore, again, calling on the Government to provide urgent, targeted support for pet owners for an initial period of 12-months by removing VAT on veterinary services for pets, including medicines, and removing VAT on pet food.**

Removing the 20% VAT on pet food and veterinary services costs could be critical to many pet owners at a time when interest rates as well as costs for energy, food and fuel have all rapidly increased.

These measures will ensure that more families stay together with their pets, reducing pressure on rehoming centres and providing vital companionship through a time of great hardship for many.

Please ensure that the United Kingdom lives up to its well-earned reputation as a nation of animal lovers by ensuring that more pets are kept within loving families where they belong.

Yours,

**Owen Sharp**  
Chief Executive  
Dogs Trust

**Chris Sherwood**  
Chief Executive  
RSPCA

**Peter Laurie**  
Chief Executive  
Battersea Dogs & Cats Home

**Maggie Roberts**  
Director of Feline Welfare  
Cats Protection

**Richard Hooker**  
Director of Veterinary Services  
PDSA

**Alexandra Baker**  
Chief Operating Officer  
Pet Industry Federation

**Marisa Heath**  
Founder  
Local Government Animal  
Welfare Group