

Petitions Committee: Require motorists to stop and report collisions with cats

Activity

The Petitions Committee ran an online survey to ask petitioners for their views on including cats in Section 170 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. This change would mean that drivers would have to report a collision to the police if it involves a cat.

The survey was sent to people who signed the following petition:

[Make it a legal requirement for drivers to stop & report collisions with cats](#)

We have summarised the key themes below and illustrated them with quotes from respondents.

Response

There were **4,449** responses to the Committee's survey

Methodology

Smart Survey was used to identify and contextualise the most common words and phrases in responses to open questions in the survey. This allowed us to group and summarise recurring themes which were threaded throughout much of the responses.

Survey questions which produced statistical results have also been analysed.

In addition to this analysis of the data, Committee staff manually reviewed hundreds of individual comments and answers, using both subject searches and randomised selection.

Key themes:

Cat owners told us that losing their cat had negatively impacted their mental health

- **40%** of respondents likened losing a cat to losing a family member
- **72%** of respondents referred to the negative impact of losing a cat on their mental health
- **97%** of survey respondents who had lost a cat in a road traffic accident told us they would have felt 'a lot' or 'a little' better if the driver had to report the collision with their cat to the police.

Quotes from survey respondents

- Survey respondent: "Cats are members of our families. Some people love their cats as much (sometimes more) than the human members of their family. Losing a member of your family is emotional and hard no matter who they are. But knowing that someone has killed a part of your family and not had the human decency to stop and notify the owner makes it all the more hurtful."
 - Survey respondent: "Losing my cat was traumatic, as a small child from a broken home, the family pets meant everything to me, they were my friends and my closest family members."
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Cat owners who had lost a cat told us that not knowing what had happened to their cat worsened the impact of their loss

- **52%** of respondents said that they had lost their cat as a result of a road traffic accident. **14%** said they suspected that their cat had been killed in a road traffic accident but had been unable to confirm this.
- **97%** of respondents said that having the police inform them would have saved them unnecessary pain.
- Some respondents told us that the loss of their cat continued to affect them for years. They said that this was worse when they don't know what happened to their cat.

Quotes from survey respondents

- Survey respondent: "Sometimes, to make the pain of losing a best furry friend less intense, it would be nice to just know what happened. Instead of finding them dead at the side of the road."
- Survey respondent: "Not knowing what happened made the loss of our cat much more worrying and painful. The worry and stress were constant, and we were unable to move on from this because we didn't know if he was still alive somewhere but unable to come home or had actually died."

Respondents said that cats should be recognised in law in the same way as dogs because many legal requirements, such as microchipping, are the same for cat and dog owners

Quotes from survey respondents

- Survey respondent: "How can we have one rule for dogs and another for cats?"

- Survey respondent: "How it isn't a legal requirement to report cats that have been in collisions is crazy to me. Cats are pets just as dogs are., so why is it not a requirement for them to be reported, especially when cats are outdoor cats mostly?"
- Survey respondent: "They have to report collisions with dogs. If a cat has to be microchipped the same as a dog, then it has the same rights."

Respondents gave a number of reasons why collisions with cats should be reported to the police

- The majority (**96%**) of respondents told us that it was very or somewhat important for them to hear directly from the police if their cat was killed by a car.

Respondents said that informing the police about collisions with cats could result in:

- Veterinary support for a cat if police took the cat to the vets.
- Reduced shock for owners if police were able to remove any deceased cats from the scene of the accident.
- A greater likelihood that owners would be matched with their cats if police arranged for the cat's microchip to be scanned and then informed owners.

Quotes from survey respondents

- Survey respondent: "[reporting to the police] would allow the cat to be scanned for a chip and families to have a choice about what happens next"
- Survey respondent: "informing the police would allow the families owning the cat to have at least some peace of mind, knowing they are out of pain and

are not starving to death trapped somewhere.”

was devastating for the whole family as he was more than a cat but a member of our family.”

A small number of respondents expressed concerns that involving the police would be a poor use of police resources

- Some suggested passing the responsibility for receiving reports of road traffic collisions with animals to community support officers.
- Other respondents recommended that people should be legally required to report collisions with cats to vets, a dog warden or local council.

“I was devastated and became extremely depressed. I then became the target of mockery and bullying, as an adult, because I was grieving the loss of my cat. It's been 10 years and I miss Remi, my cat. The way he died was awful. No one deserves that. I keep thinking that maybe if he'd been found sooner - if the person who hit him had taken him to the vet, or phoned someone - he might have had a better chance. But by the time we found him he had gone through too much.”

Quotes from survey respondents

- Survey respondent: “I don't however think it should have to be reported to the police, the sheer number of cats that get hit each year would be a waste of police time for something that is very hard to avoid.”
- Survey respondent: “I don't. Other than reporting tying up police time, I don't see what the gain would be. I especially don't want officers to have to come and tell people that's just a waste of their time.”
- Survey respondent: “In view of the amount of serious crime that the police don't have time to investigate, giving them this extra responsibility seems unrealistic.”

People's experiences

When asked about how the loss of their cat affected them, respondents told us:

“Our cat was hit by a car on our road. We have no idea who it was to this day. This happened at night and consequently our poor cat was left in the road until someone with enough heart reported it in the morning. This
