



## YOUR TEAM IS GOING TO RESEARCH

# Social media and animal welfare

and speak **for and against** that social media has been good for animals and their welfare

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**This brief has been produced as part of the *RSPCA's Animal Welfare: The Great Debate* and is a starting point for the research you will need to do into the subject in order to ensure a successful debate. The points for or against a subject may not be RSPCA policy and represent some of the wider thinking around the subject.**

- Social media is now a dominant part of people's lives, and for many acts as a primary source of news and entertainment. With approximately half of all households in the UK owning a pet, it is unsurprising that posting content online about animals is something many people enjoy.
- There are countless Facebook groups, Twitter pages and Instagram channels devoted to pets and animals – ranging from cute animals, to animal memes and content on how to look after animals.
- Social media is so important in raising awareness about particular causes and issues. RSPCA's own Facebook channel has over 650,000 likes – sharing content such as animal rescues, welfare advice, pets for adoption, campaigns, news, products and more.
- Inappropriate material can also be posted online, leading to people mimicking illegal or cruel actions. Use of social media has also become habitual for many – meaning many people spend copious amounts of time online rather than doing other things.



## FOR

Here are some points **in favour** of debating social media has been good for animals – what other points can you find?

- Social media is a fantastic tool for people to find animals to rehome, find lost animals or to learn about how to treat animals.
- Animal content often makes people happy, and can be very popular; emphasising the role that animals play in delivering good mental wellbeing.
- Social media can be used to inform about animal welfare issue across the globe and generate awareness – creating activists who can campaign for the better treatment of animals.

## AGAINST

Here are some reasons why it is **not necessary** – can you find any more?

- Highlighting the mistreatment of animals online can lead to sharing of graphic imagery – which may upset people or cause trauma.
- Many people may post poor treatment of their animals to the internet to 'show off' or seek to go viral – potentially encouraging other people to adopt bad practice too.
- Posting information about your own animal to the internet opens an individual up to scrutiny, and could lead to disputes or even bullying.

## Information you may want to find out

- What sort of content have you seen on social media about animals and their welfare?
- What key messages and campaigns do people share on social media related to animals?
- How can we ensure people post safe and appropriate content about animals online?

## Potential sources of information

- RSPCA website: [www.rspca.cymru](http://www.rspca.cymru)
- Political Animal website: [www.politicalanimal.wales](http://www.politicalanimal.wales)
- RSPCA facts and figures: <http://media.rspca.org.uk/media/facts>
- <https://www.facebook.com/RSPCA/>
- [https://twitter.com/RSPCA\\_official](https://twitter.com/RSPCA_official)
- [https://www.instagram.com/official\\_rspca/](https://www.instagram.com/official_rspca/)

