Charity grant opens to support UK rescues caring for victims of the pet trade

Tuesday 27 January, 2026

Animal welfare charity Naturewatch Foundation is inviting rescues across the UK to apply for its annual Pet Rescue Grant, which supports animals harmed by the low-welfare and illegal pet trade.

Now in its third year, the grant provides funding for the rescue and rehabilitation of dogs, cats and rabbits who have been exploited for profit. These animals often arrive into rescue with complex physical and behavioural needs, making their care particularly challenging and costly.

One grant of up to £10,000 is available to UK-registered charities and CICs with an income up to £5 million, while a mini-grant of £1,000 is open to unregistered charities and community organisations in the UK.

The funding can be used towards veterinary treatment, behavioural support, specialist equipment or training, or other essential costs directly linked to the rescue and rehabilitation of animals impacted by the low-welfare pet trade.

Natalie Harney, Campaign Manager at Naturewatch Foundation, said:

“The Pet Rescue Grant is needed now more than ever. We’re hearing from animal rescues that costs are spiralling while animals arrive with increasingly complex welfare issues, and often require extensive veterinary care and behavioural support.

“At the same time, animals continue to be exploited for profit, trapping many dogs, cats and rabbits in a cycle of suffering where they’re treated like commodities. This grant is our small way of helping rescues give those animals the care they desperately need. Ultimately, though, we need the public to help end the illicit pet trade by making careful choices if they decide to welcome an animal into their home, either by supporting a reputable rescue through rehoming or acting responsibly if they do consider buying.”

Naturewatch Foundation campaigns to end low-welfare and illegal breeding. Last year, the charity revealed that four in five puppies in the UK come from unknown sources, with fewer than 20% originating from breeders who are subject to regulation and inspection. While the charity strongly supports regulation of the puppy trade, it also remains concerned that current rules, and their enforcement, are failing to adequately protect dogs and their puppies.

In recent weeks, Naturewatch Foundation has welcomed the UK government’s commitment to ending puppy farming, but says swift action is needed to make this a reality.

The organisation has also recently supported an open letter to Pets at Home, coordinated by Rescue Not Retail, urging the company’s new CEO to stop selling live animals in stores. The call aims to reduce impulse buying of small animals, including rabbits, rodents, fish and reptiles, whose welfare and care needs are often far more complex than new owners realise.

Expressions of interest for the Pet Rescue Grant open from 24 January to 14 February 2026.

Rescues can find out more at naturewatch.org/petrescuegrant.

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Dogs :: Cats :: Rabbits :: Animals :: Animal Welfare :: Grant :: Pet Trade :: Grant :: Vets :: Wildlife :: Charity :: Puppy Farming :: Ethical Pets :: Ethical ::

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About Naturewatch Foundation:

Naturewatch Foundation is a UK-based animal welfare charity dedicated to ending cruelty and improving the lives of animals through campaigning, education and advocacy. For over 30 years, the charity has led initiatives to tackle illegal and unethical practices, including puppy farming, animal experiments and wildlife crime. By working with policymakers, enforcement agencies and the public, Naturewatch Foundation strives to make the world a kinder place for animals. Visit naturewatch.org to find out more.

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