

Animal Welfare Enforcement Roles

The Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, (the 2011 Act), is enforced by DAERA (Livestock), Councils (domestic pets) and PSNI (wildlife and fighting offences). The 2011 Act sets out a range of welfare offences for which penalties may be imposed when a person has committed an offence set out in the legislation. The maximum penalty available in Northern Ireland for the most serious welfare offences is: five years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.

The 2011 Act enshrines the five needs of an animal in law: the need for a suitable environment; the need for a suitable diet; the need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns; any need to be housed with or apart from, other animals; and the need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease. On occasions this can merit an improvement notice that the enforcement bodies can issue and follow up on.

Enforcement bodies: (DAERA, Councils and PSNI) investigate all animal welfare related complaints and have statutory enforcement powers to take a range of actions when investigating a complaint. Action taken will be determined by the severity of the incident. Actions can include giving advice; issuing verbal warnings; issuing improvement notices (except PSNI); and, in extreme cases of suffering, taking animals into their possession and initiating prosecution action.

Enforcement bodies are unable to comment on any active or ongoing investigations.

The Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is responsible for farmed animals (any animal bred or kept for the production of food, wool or skin or for other farming purposes).

Councils are responsible for enforcement in respect of non-farmed animals i.e. domestic pets and equines (e.g. horses and donkeys etc).

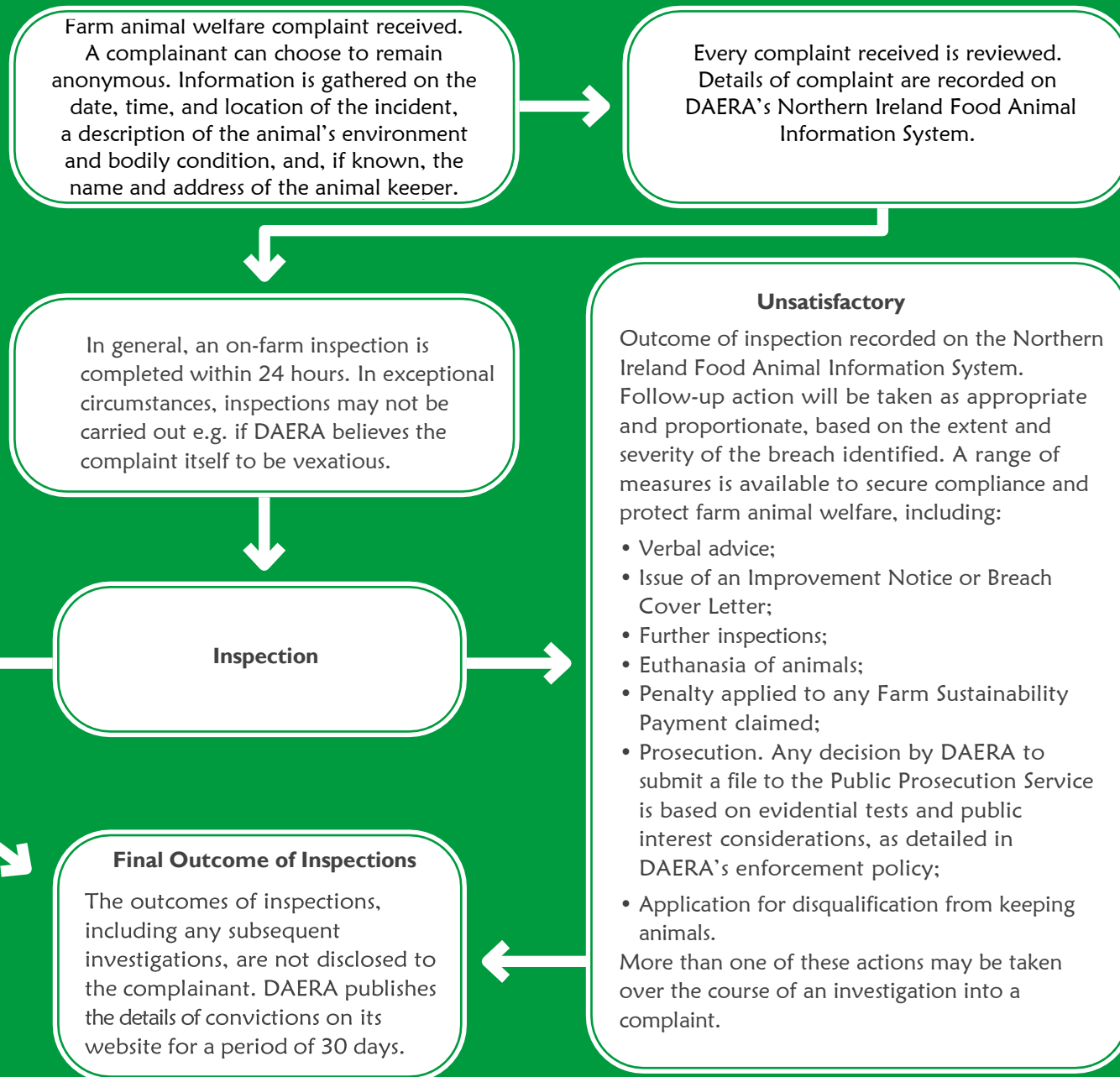
PSNI enforce section 8 of the 2011 Act for animal fighting such as badger baiting, dog fighting or cockerel fighting. The PSNI is also responsible for wildlife crime which can include poisoning of wild birds and illegal trapping of wildlife.

If you wish to speak to someone regarding the welfare of farmed animals please contact DAERA:
During office hours - Monday to Friday
9am-5pm telephone - 0300 200 7840
At weekends - contact a local Private Veterinary Practice or a local Police Station who will, as necessary, refer the welfare complaint to the relevant DAERA "on call" officer.

If you wish to speak to someone regarding the welfare of non-farmed animals i.e. domestic pets, horses, donkeys please [contact your local Council](#).
At weekends and over holiday periods contact the same number and your call will be diverted to an answering service.

If you wish to make a complaint about animal fighting you should contact the PSNI on 101, or online at www.psni.police.uk or anonymously using Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111.
PSNI can also investigate organised crime and economic crime involving animals and work with DAERA and Councils to do so.

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, (DAERA)



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

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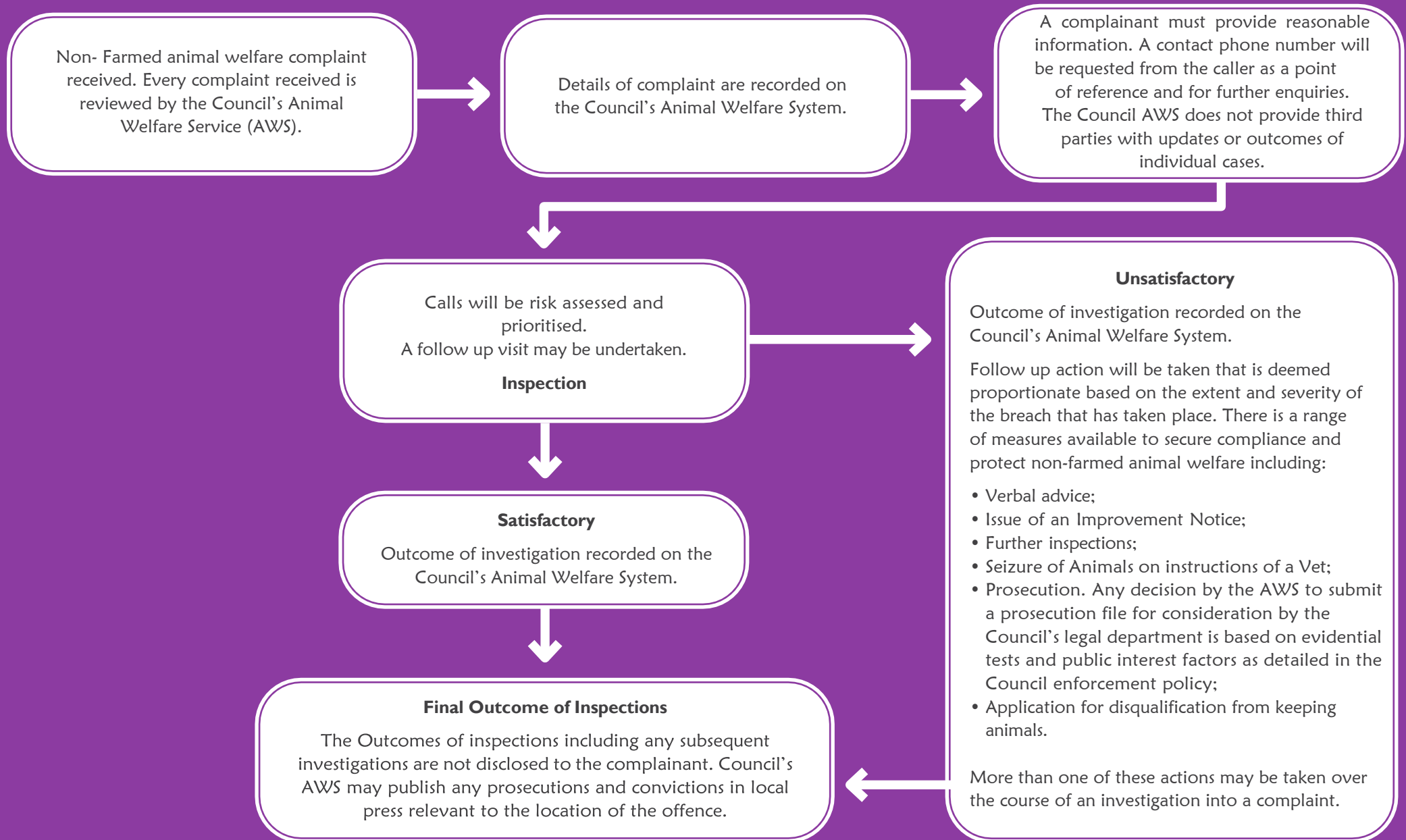
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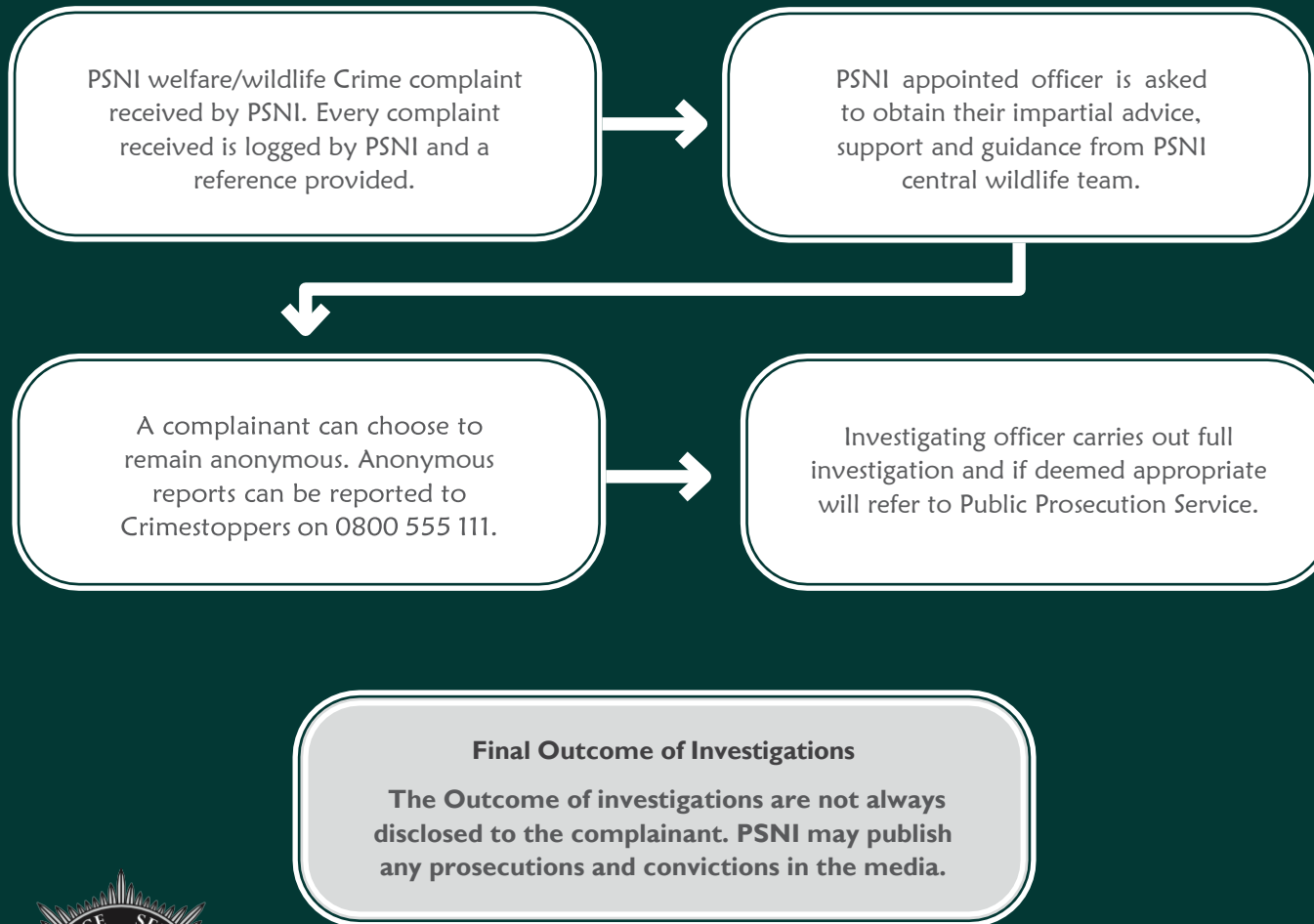
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www.daera-ni.gov.uk

NI Councils



Police Service of NI (PSNI) Central Wildlife/Animal Welfare Team



There are a range of measures available and some examples include:

- Referral to local Councils Animal Welfare Services if report is in relation to domestic pets.
 - Referral to DAERA if report is in relation to livestock.
 - Seizure of Animals.
 - Application for Disposal Order on any Animal seized.
 - Prosecution. Any decision by the PSNI to ultimately submit a prosecution file is based on evidential tests and public interest factors.
 - Application for disqualification from keeping animals.
 - Further penalties may include; probation order, conditional discharge, monetary, prison, suspended sentence, prohibition for keeping animals.
 - PSNI may seek an application for costs for PSNI's care/treatment of the animal against the owner/ defendant where appropriate.
- More than one of these actions may be taken over the course of an investigation into a complaint.

