



Veterinary
Practitioners
Board

Managing Complaints

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Agenda



Who



Why



What

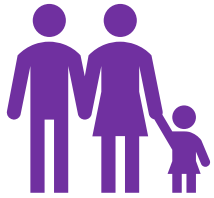


How



Support

Who makes complaints against veterinarians?



Clients



Colleagues



Board



Other Regulators

Who makes complaints against veterinarians?

- Any person may raise a complaint against a veterinarian in NSW
- The majority of complaints against veterinarians are made by members of the public and typically by the animal owner or client
- The Board may raise a complaint against a veterinarian based on information obtained including
 - Notifications
 - Hospital inspections
- Other regulatory bodies including NSW Health, Racing NSW, Greyhound Welfare Integrity Commission, and NSW Department of Primary Industries



Why do people make complaints against veterinarians?



Quality



Trust



Human animal bond
and grief



Money

Expectations and quality¹

		Price		
High price and low quality			High price and high quality	
		Quality		
Low price and low quality				Low price and high quality



Expectations and quality²

- Veterinary clients want their veterinarian to be:
 - Kind and gentle
 - Respectful and informative
 - A provider of high quality care



Features of services affect quality¹

- Intangibility
- Perishability
- Inseparability
- Heterogeneity



Why don't we receive complaints against veterinarians?³

- I don't think it will do any good
- I don't think it is worth the trouble
- I don't know how or where to complain
- I am afraid of retribution



Why don't we receive complaints against veterinarians?

Because it has been well managed by the veterinarian or the hospital



What are complaints against veterinarians about?



Taxonomy



Systems perspective



Complainant perspective



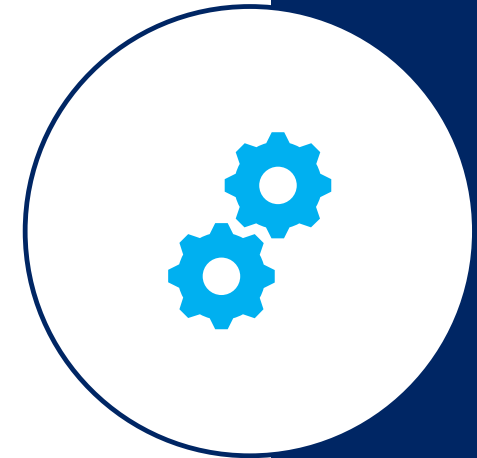
Board perspective

Complaint taxonomy^{4,5}

Domain	Category	Sub-category
Clinical	Quality	Inadequate examination
		Poor or unsuccessful treatment
	Safety	Errors in diagnosis
		Medication errors
Management	Institutional issues	Poor accommodation or hygiene
		Inadequate staff, resources
		Billing
	Timing and access	Lack of access to staff, delays in referral
Relationships	Communication	Inadequate, delayed, incorrect
	Caring	Rude, disrespectful,
	Rights	Confidentiality, consent

Systems – individuals and processes^{6,7}

- The Board receives complaints against individual veterinarians
- Performance of individual veterinarians though is affected by group processes: leadership, structure, decision making, communication, change management, conflict management and culture
 - Poor processes can adversely affect individual performance
 - Strong processes can prevent poor individual performance
- Quality management research suggests that around 70% of quality issues are systems related and can be addressed through better processes, procedures and protocols



Complainant perspective

- Acknowledgement
- Apology
- Assurance

- Compensation
- Removal from Register



Board perspective

- Dismissed
- Guilty of a breach and Board action
- Guilty of a breach and referral to a tribunal for its consideration



Board perspective

- Conduct
- Performance
- Health



Board perspective⁸

- Management of case not in accordance with current standards
- Records not in sufficient detail to allow another veterinarian to continue treatment
- Failure to gain informed consent from the client before providing a service
- Failure to explain the likely extent and outcome of services and/or estimate fees
- Failure to utilise the skills of colleagues by consultation or referral as appropriate
- Not making arrangements for the ongoing care of an animal



Board perspective⁸

- Supply of restricted substances without a physical examination
- Failure to provide records to another veterinarian when requested and with consent of the client
- Breach of client confidentiality
- Failure to comply with the rules of sporting organisations
- Assistants do not have skills, knowledge or equipment to perform duties to current standards



How to respond to a complaint



Opportunity



Respect and empathy

Complaints are an opportunity to learn and improve⁹

[Amy's Baking Company](#)



Respect, empathy and trust

- Acknowledge their concerns
- Express sympathy and apologise for inconvenience or suffering
- Provide an assurance that you will act on their concerns and follow up with them
- Be open and honest



Support



Colleagues and
Employer



Insurer



Professional
Association



Services



Health Program

Support

Veterinarians may seek support from friends and family, colleagues, employer, professional indemnity insurers, the [Australian Veterinary Association](#), the [Doctors' Health Advisory Service](#) and generic support services such as [Lifeline](#) and [Beyond Blue](#).

The Board also appreciates that stressors associated with the performance of the professional duties of a veterinarian may be increased during a complaint investigation process.

The Board's Complaint Officer is a trained counsellor and able to provide support for both veterinarians and members of the public involved in complaint investigations.



Health Program

The Board has developed a [Health Program](#) based on that used by the Medical Council of NSW to assist veterinarians with health problems brought to its attention through self reporting or complaints processes



Summary



Any person can make a complaint against a veterinarian in NSW and the majority of complaints are from clients.



Errors, adverse outcomes, dissatisfaction with the quality of services, erosion of trust, grief, concerns about money may all contribute to complaints.



Complaints can be divided into clinical, management and relationship domains.
From the Board perspective concerns may relate to conduct, performance or health issues.



Complaints are an opportunity to improve and should be examined at both the individual and the system perspective.



Don't be afraid to seek support from colleagues, insurers, professional associations and other service providers.
The Board appreciates complaints can be stressful.

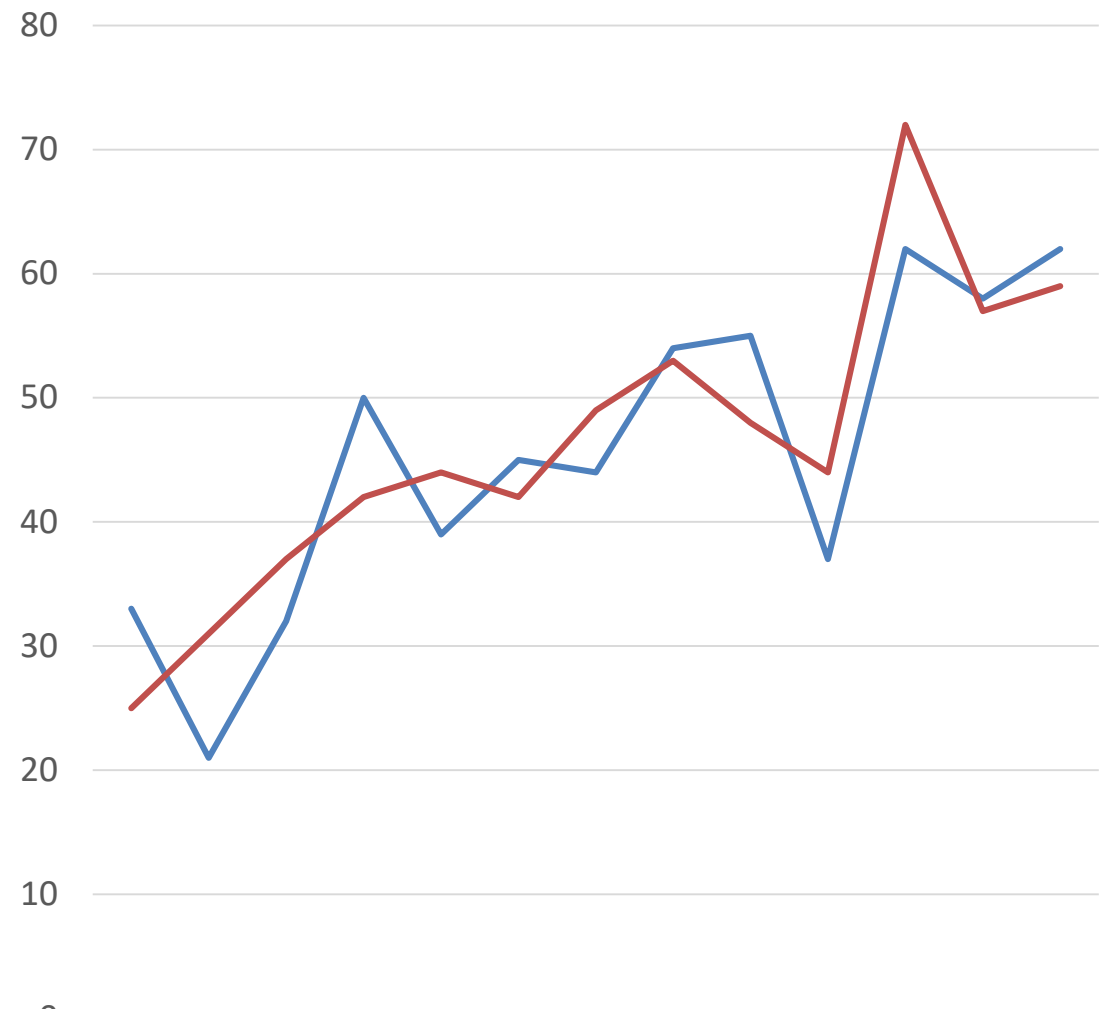
References

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Summary Complaint Statistics 2007 – 2019

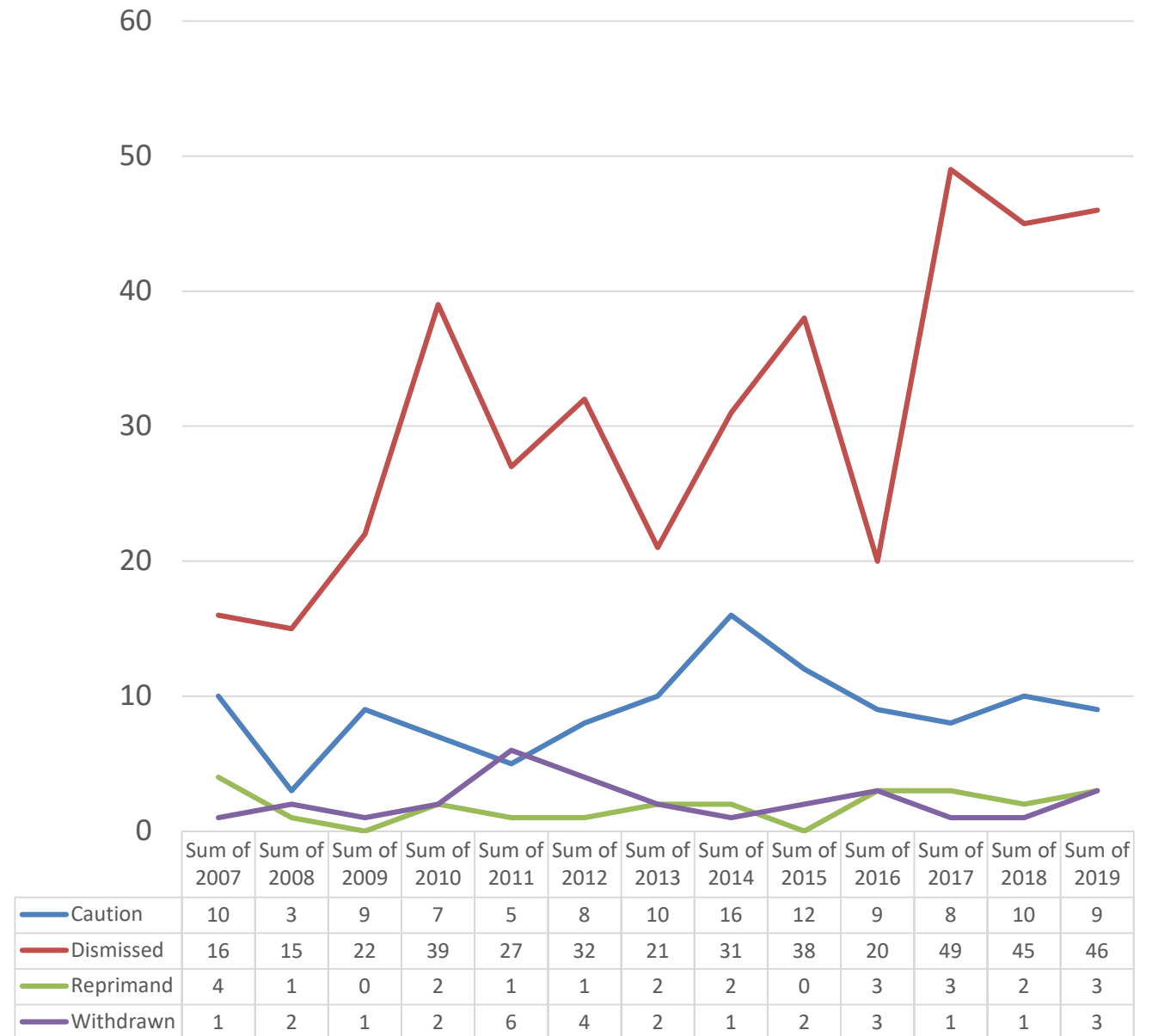


Finalised and New Complaints 2007-2019

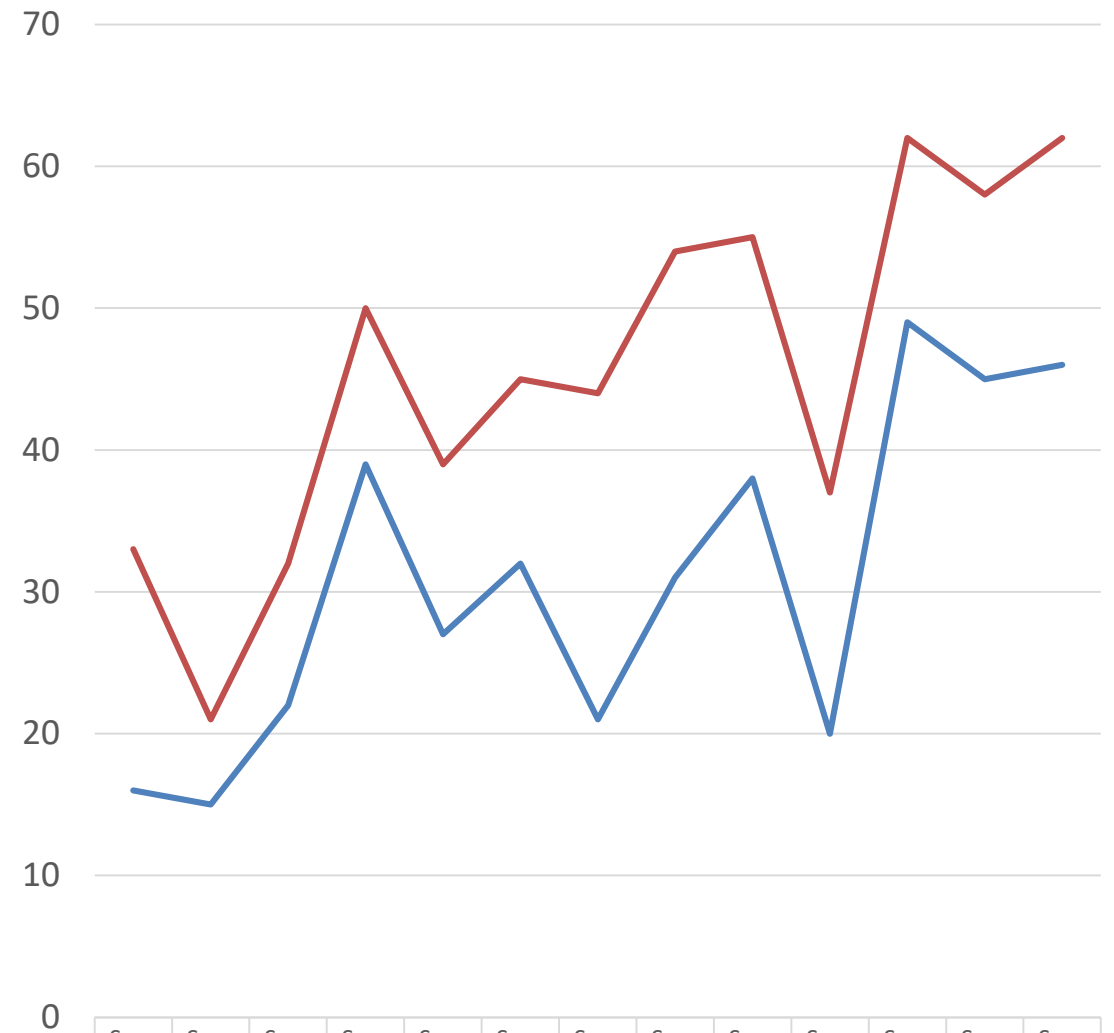


	Sum of 2007	Sum of 2008	Sum of 2009	Sum of 2010	Sum of 2011	Sum of 2012	Sum of 2013	Sum of 2014	Sum of 2015	Sum of 2016	Sum of 2017	Sum of 2018	Sum of 2019
Finalised Complaints	33	21	32	50	39	45	44	54	55	37	62	58	62
New Complaints	25	31	37	42	44	42	49	53	48	44	72	57	59

Complaint decisions 2007-2019

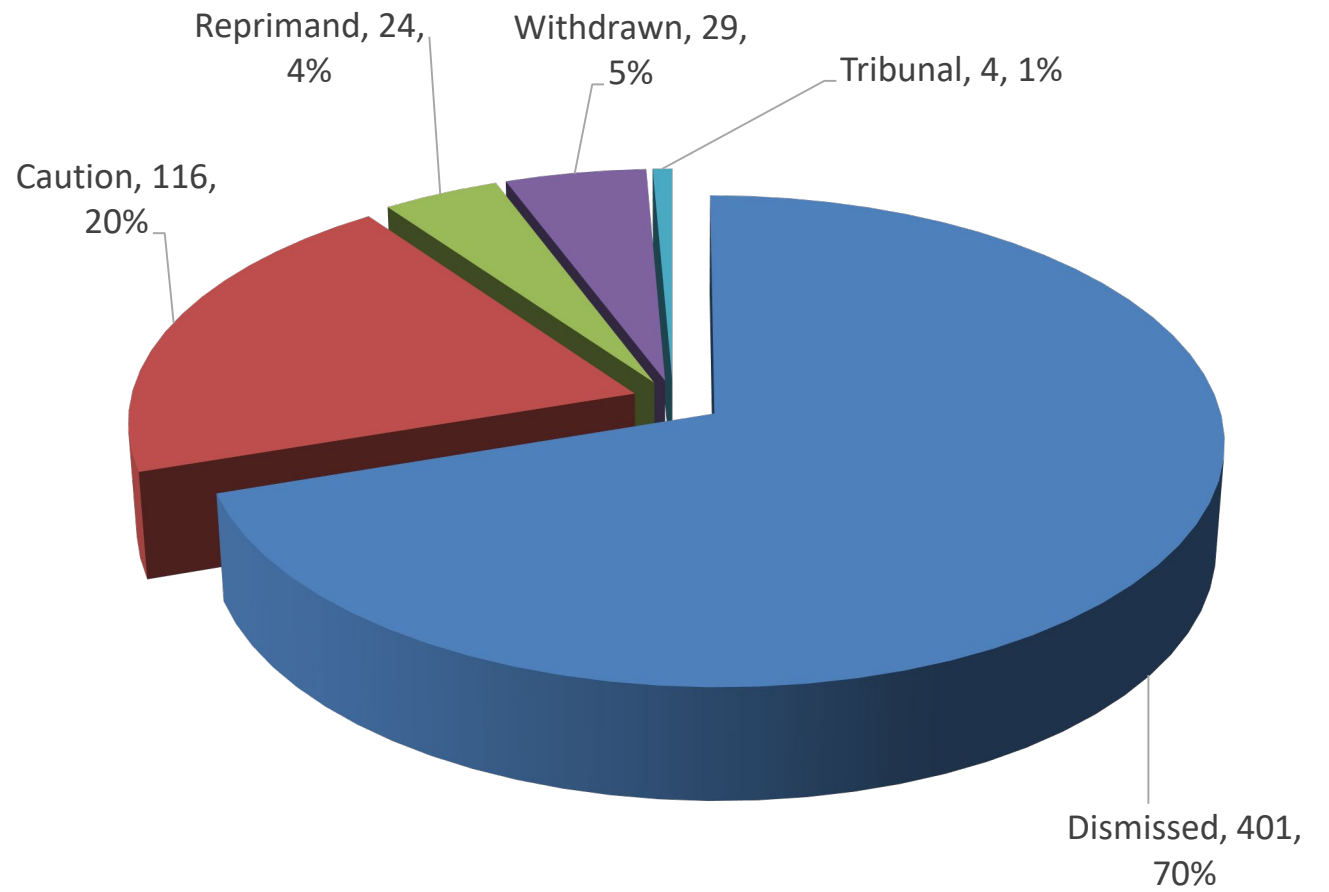


Complaint decisions 2007-2019

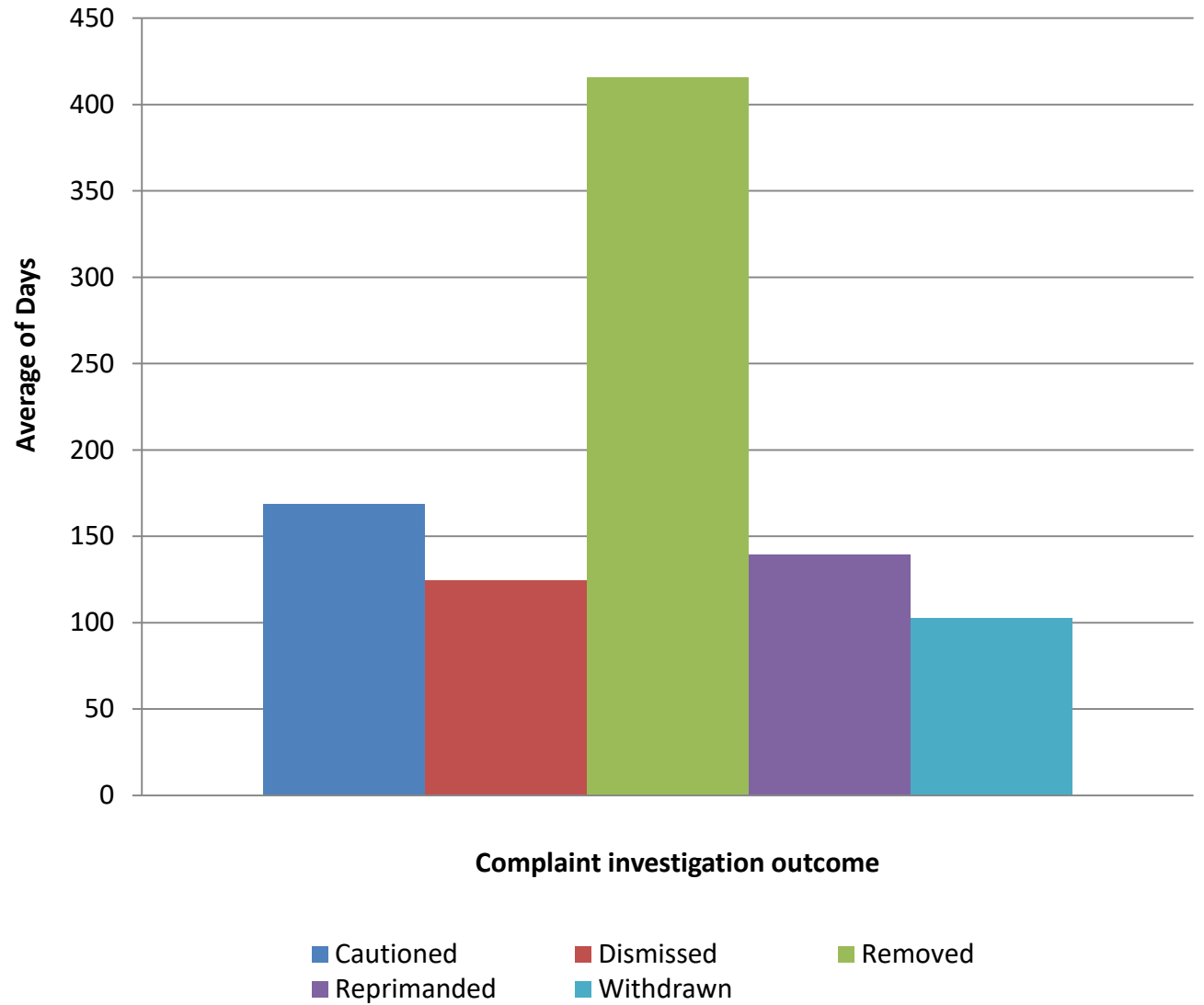


	Sum of 2007	Sum of 2008	Sum of 2009	Sum of 2010	Sum of 2011	Sum of 2012	Sum of 2013	Sum of 2014	Sum of 2015	Sum of 2016	Sum of 2017	Sum of 2018	Sum of 2019
Dismissed	16	15	22	39	27	32	21	31	38	20	49	45	46
Finalised Complaints	33	21	32	50	39	45	44	54	55	37	62	58	62

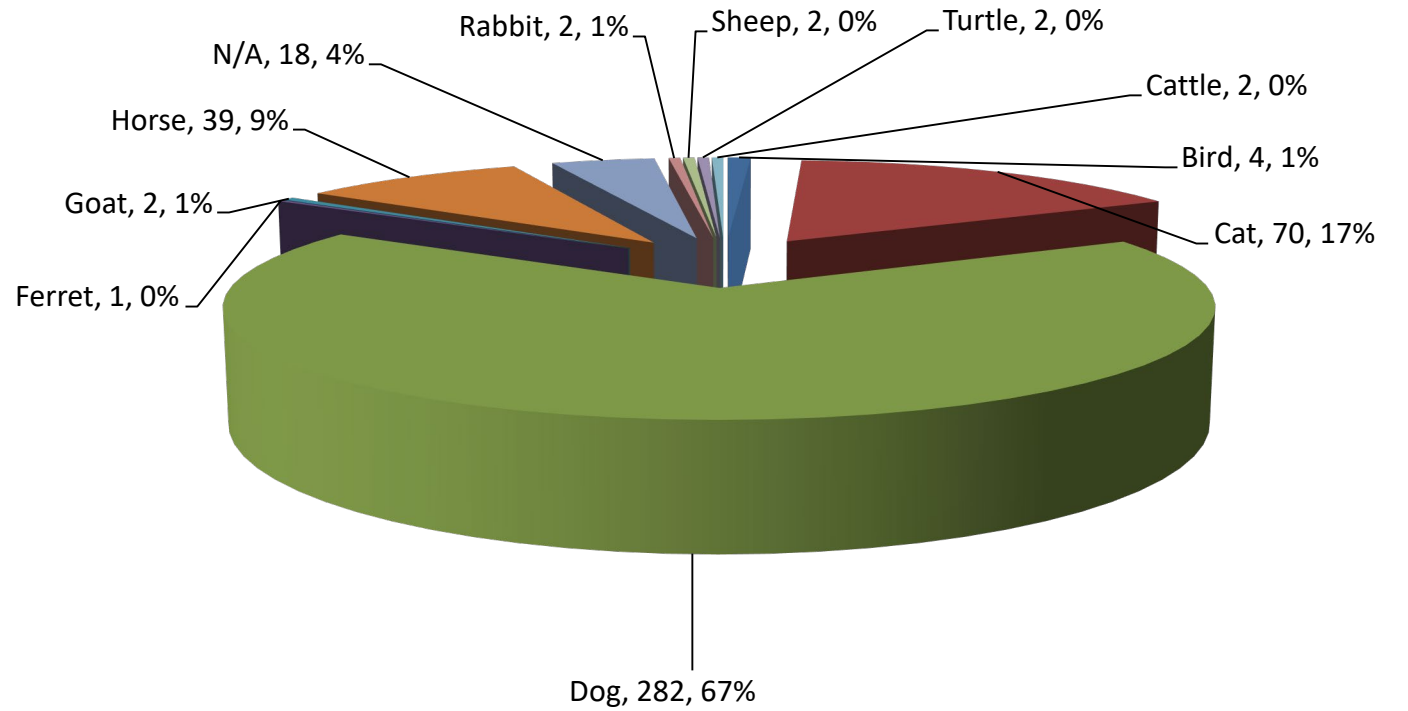
Complaints investigated by decision 2007-2019



Complaints by average number of days to decision 2006-2015



Complaints by species 2007-2014



Complaints by year of graduation 2007-2014

