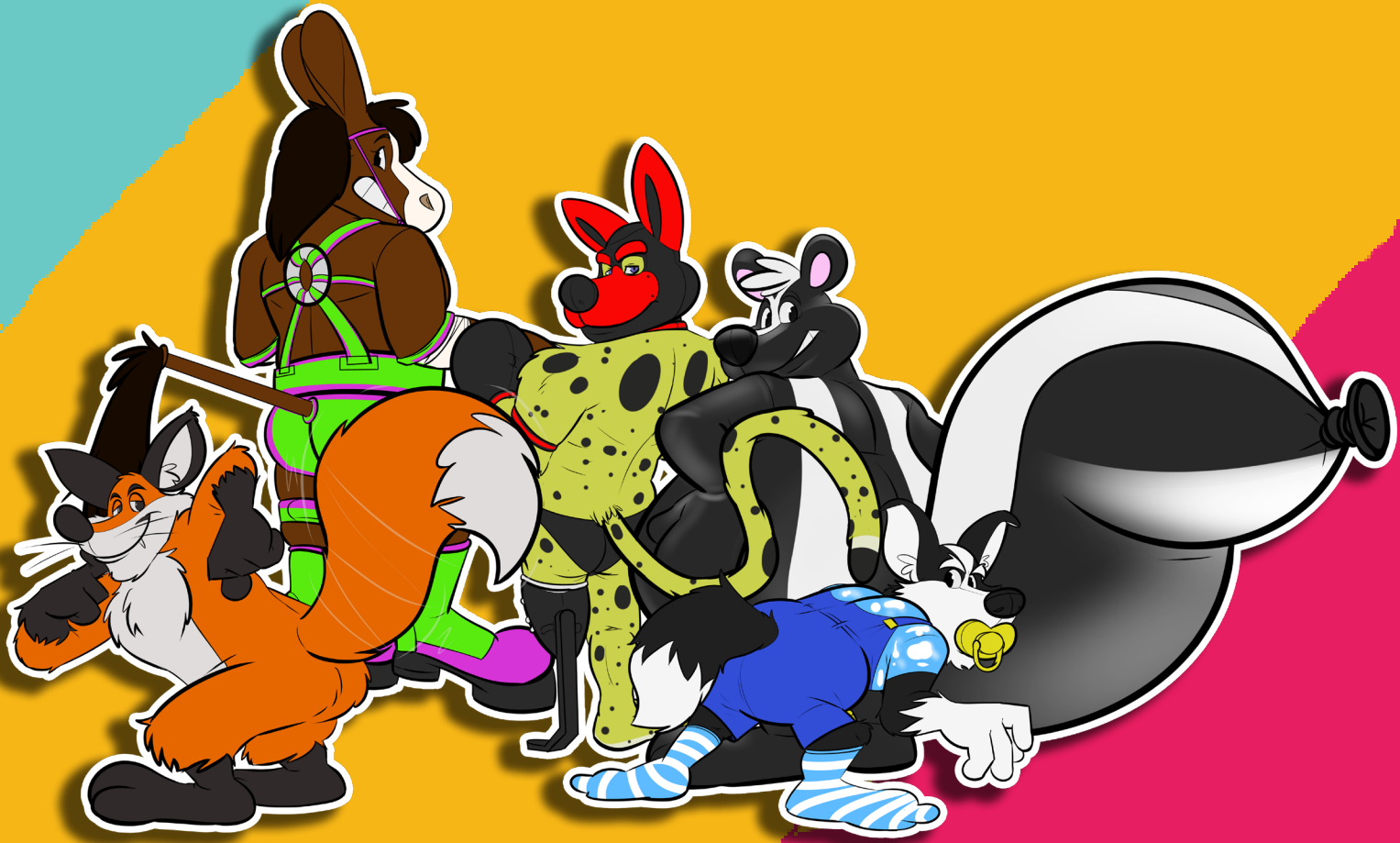


PAWSOME

FEEDBACK ANALYSIS 2024



INTRODUCTION

Back in October, the week after the convention ended, we put out a request for feedback. This was off the back of telling our attendees in the closing ceremony that at Pawsome, we wanted to approach convention feedback differently, with an aim to be open about common issues and specifically what we would do to address them.

We said at the time that it would take a while to analyse and respond to, and it has - we received a lot of often very detailed and thoughtful responses, for which we thank you, but it has certainly been a lot of work to wade through them all.

We can't respond to every single one, though we have read them all, and while we will shine a light on some of the positive comments, the main aim of this document is to acknowledge what we can do better – and how. Although it feels a bit scary to talk openly about what went wrong, we're proud of this approach and we hope that it goes to show we take your feedback and experience at Pawsome seriously.



CONTENTS

4: Some interesting stats!

We wanted to start off by sharing some data that gives an insight into who exactly attended Pawsome in 2024.

5: Your Praise and Our Staff Appreciation

Before you dive into the full feedback analysis, we wanted to give our staff a shout out (and thank you for your kind comments!).

6: The Big Three

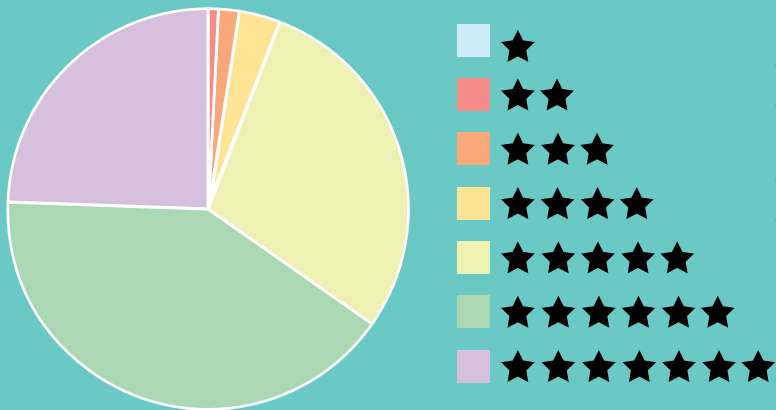
For those who don't want to sit down for an hour with a cup of tea to go through this document, we've summarised the top three most mentioned bits of attendee feedback.

7: Full Feedback Analysis

Got your tea? Got a comfy seat? Great - because here's the rest of the feedback!

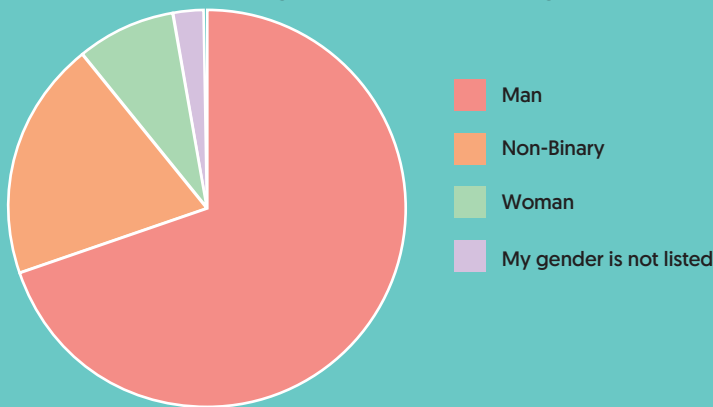
STATISTICS

So, overall, what did you think of this convention?

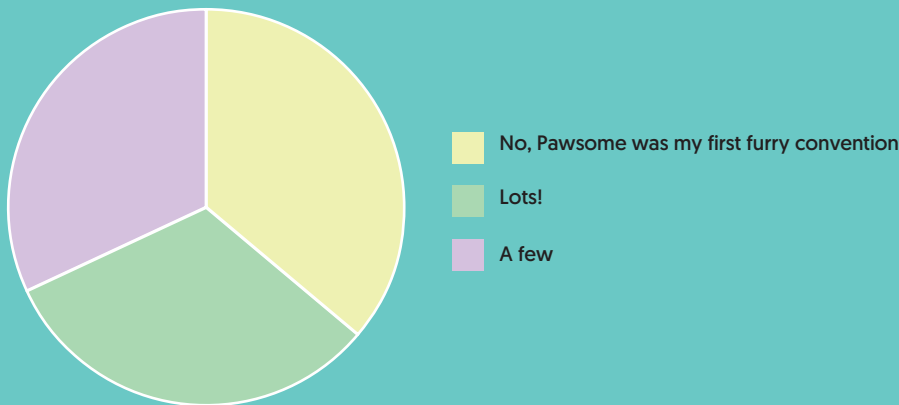


We wanted to start by sharing a few interesting demographics and stats from our convention which we feel not only offers an insight as to the crowd attending Pawsome but also interesting facts we don't usually think about when it comes to our community and conventions!

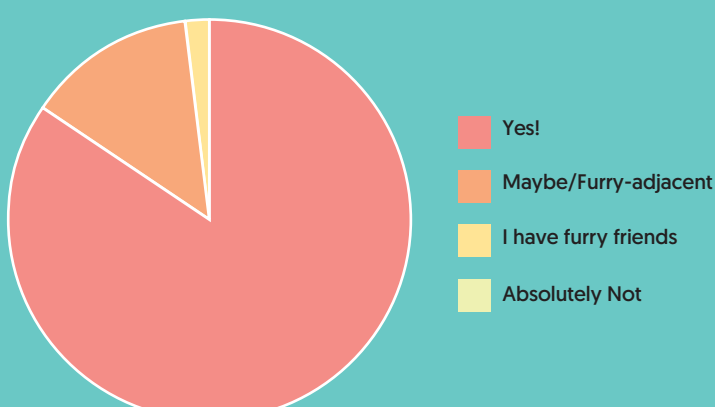
Which of the following best describes your gender?



Have you been to other furry conventions?



Do you consider yourself a furry?



YOUR PRAISE AND OUR STAFF APPRECIATION

We wanted to start off with some positive comments that include shout outs to our staff, because a few of our staff members (a couple of attendees) felt that we could have celebrated our staff better. We know that without the dedication of our staff and volunteers, Pawsome would not have been the success that it has been, and we never want our staff to feel that their hard work has not been celebrated enough. That's why we wanted to shine a light on some of the staff members that were mentioned in attendee feedback. In addition to continuing to have all our staff named in the conbook and having them stand up for applause and celebration at the closing ceremony, we will also have them join the directors on stage and we will give them the opportunity to introduce themselves and their role to the convention attendees so that attendees know who to thank for their work!

Can't remember who it was exactly but it was definitely someone in a hi vis who bought me and my den assistant bar menus, they said we looked like we hadn't gotten a break all day :P

Staff were great at helping fixing issues when they did pop up and when they could.

Thanks a lot to the staff. I loved Pawsome and can't wait to do it again next year. You guys did an amazing job. I might not like all the kinks on display, especially ABDL, but I'm glad we give people a safe space. This is what matters.

It was great to have an event where you could be more "you" and not be afraid to wear less "normal" attire in public. I don't think I've worn rubber as much at any event before due to feeling like I was going to be judged negatively, but this was not the case at Pawsome!

I'd like to nominate Doveaux for being a pawsome staff member. He ran an improv event which was lots of fun, and I'd like to encourage him to run more of those at future cons. I enjoyed it a lot.

@Buntline for being an all-round lovely person, giving me his spare lanyard and [IIRC] offering to take a picture of me and my partner when I couldn't reach the mirror xD

I can honestly hand on heart say I have never had a more rewarding, enriching and fulfilling weekend than I did at pawsome. For once at a con I felt able to give everyone the time they deserved and felt so relaxed and at ease that I could just be me, represent my kinks and niches in all of the best ways and as Froggy said - be unapologetically me! This is the first con I left with a genuine satisfaction of having had an amazing, rewarding, relaxing and eye opening time, and a con where I didn't feel like I needed an extra holiday to relax afterwards. My absolute jewel in the crown moment was sitting in on the little paws story time on the last night of the con, I shed tears of happiness wearing my fursuit, sat with all of my friends being their best selves, it felt like family, like home like a true sense of belonging and I have never been so overcome and overwhelmed with such a strong feeling of community bonding

THE BIG THREE

More Organised Events:

A lot of you felt our events could have run better, so here's what we're going to do next year to fix that:

- Implement queuing systems for larger events that require physical participation. For instance, our inflatable meet and greet will feature a queue for attendees to try on suits.
- Establish clear objectives for each event. For example, the community safari lacked focus, so we will be trying a different approach next year.
- Adjust event durations to enhance the overall experience. For example, we could shorten the dance night to one evening while extending the duration of smaller events for longer sessions.

Clearer Communication:

A lot of you felt that we could have communicated changes in schedules and even the layout of the hotel better. Next year we will:

- We acknowledge that the signs around the hotel was not entirely clear, and we will ensure that it is improved for next year. To achieve this, we will print large posters to be displayed in key locations before the event.
- We will keep you informed about events to prevent any potential miscommunication. For instance, we will make sure attendees know that we have spare guns available for the Nerf gun tournament.
- The hotel systems will be upgraded during the first phase of next year to facilitate easier communication through the Telegram channel for updates on events.

Bigger Spaces:

You loved our venue so much, you want it BIGGER! And so do we - because some spaces felt a bit too small. While we can't physically change the space next year, we can try and be more efficient, so next year:

- We recognize that the demand for the Dealers Den was greater than anticipated, and we will be significantly expanding its size for next year.
- While we may not be able to relocate our Fursuit Lounge, we will enhance it to provide larger areas for people to change.

FULL FEEDBACK

Music and Dances:

This was probably the most common complaint, which came as no surprise - clearly the big dance nights that work at larger cons don't transfer well to a smaller event with a more laid-back style.

Evenings at Pawsome 2025 will look quite different - provisionally our plan is to limit it to a single dance event, most likely on Saturday, with a more popular choice of music. The other two nights will offer musical entertainment of a more communal and participatory kind - given the number of requests for karaoke that's likely to feature quite heavily, but we'll see what other ideas come up too. We will also allow the Events team to schedule panels and games in the evening as well as the daytime, for those who want something different.

2025 Pre-Registration

The convention schedule showed a Pre-Registration event for Pawsome 2025 on Monday morning. This was cancelled, which confused or annoyed some people, for which we apologise.

The reason is that we were originally going to take deposits, in person at the till, to secure a place at Pawsome 2025. However, without the 2024 financial results or projected 2025 costs at that stage, we couldn't yet confirm the ticket price for 2025. We felt it was unreasonable to ask people to pay a deposit without telling them what the final price would be, so the pre-reg idea turned into a mere "expression of interest". It then seemed pointless, on a busy morning when everyone was trying to pack and check out of the hotel, to have people queue up just to add their names to a list. And so it was cancelled entirely, though certainly the cancellation could have been better communicated.

We remain committed to the principle that if you attended Pawsome 2024, you will have priority for Pawsome 2025 over those who did not. This will be managed as part of the registration process for next year.



Is Pawsome Even a Furry Convention?

We had a small number of comments suggesting that, with the range of expression encouraged and seen at Pawsome, it shouldn't be considered a furry convention at all. We're happy to follow the very broad definition of "Furry" that Mark Merlino espoused in his panel at Confuzzled 2023, and say that Anthropomorphism doesn't just mean toony polyester faux-fur. Yes, Pawsome is different to other furry conventions - that's a feature not a bug.

That said, it's certainly true that "What Exactly is Pawsome?" wasn't very clearly communicated in advance of the convention - our directors knew what they wanted to create, but didn't find it easy to articulate, and the convention often ended up being defined in terms of what it isn't rather than what it is. The FAQ on the website was neglected and remained frustratingly vague for far too long.

As a practical matter, a lot of this uncertainty should be gone now. Pawsome 2024 was held, and it was by and large exactly what it was intended to be. If people want to know if it's for them, they can now speak to someone who has been and ask what it's like, or look at the official photos to get a feel for the style. We know that Pawsome won't be to everybody's taste and that's completely fine - our fandom continues to grow and there's more than enough room for different styles of event to suit different preferences.

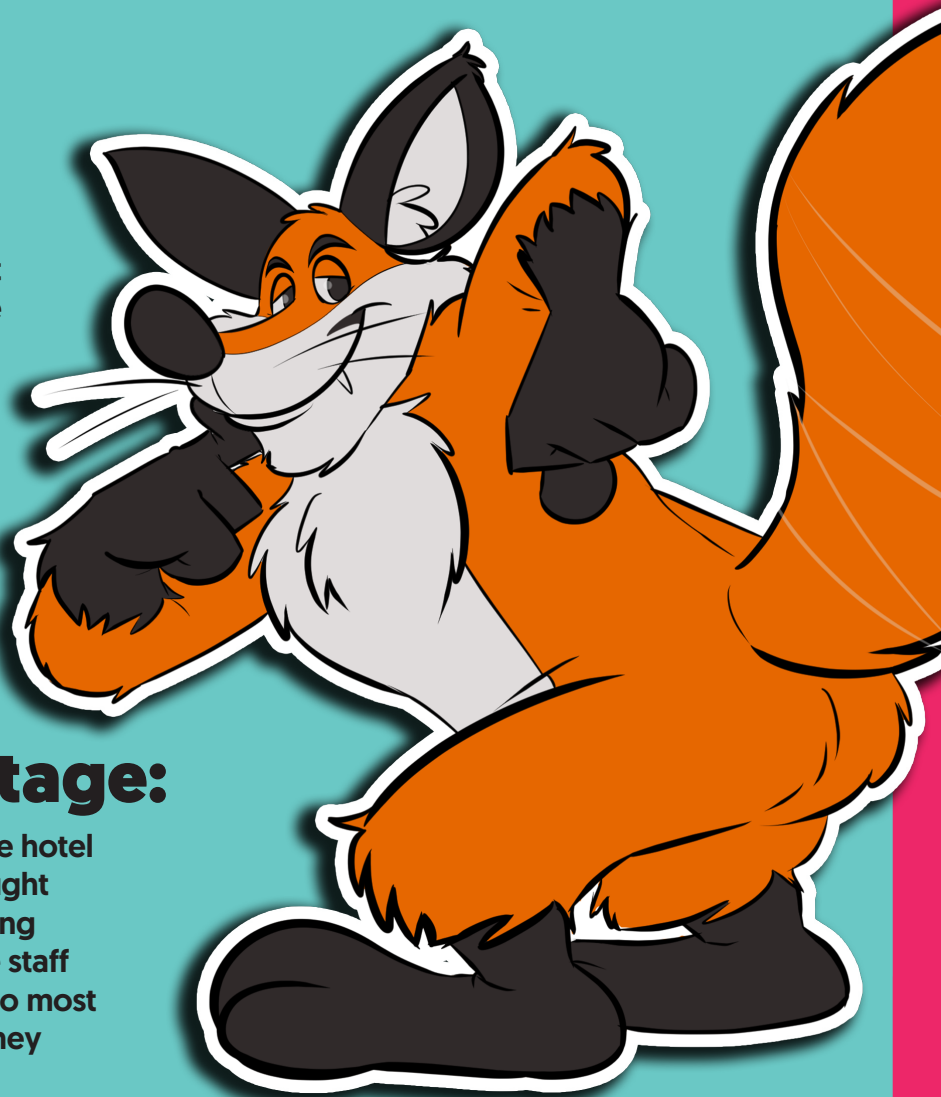
Art:

One person would have liked to see our mascots drawn by different artists. This was actually our plan, but first-con issues meant that frankly we left it too late.

Next year we would very much welcome contributions for the con book, website, banners, and so on, especially in line with our theme of "Movies and TV".

Hotel Staff on Stage:

One attendee was concerned that the hotel staff were uncomfortable being brought on stage for you to thank at the Closing Ceremony. The member of Pawsome staff who went to fetch them, and spoke to most of them afterwards, assures us that they appreciated the gesture.



Charity:

Having a convention charity in our first year was our ideal goal – however, as the planning progressed, we realised that in order to deliver the convention at the level of quality that we wanted and in order to ensure we were financially sound so that we could keep delivering the convention year after year, we would have to utilize more of the funds in year one towards the convention itself. We also struggled with planning an auction that was genuine and thought out so that attendees would be raising money for items that held value.

Now that year one is over, we are working to hold an auction in 2025 and raise money for a worthy recipient next year.

Female, Trans & Non-Binary Event:

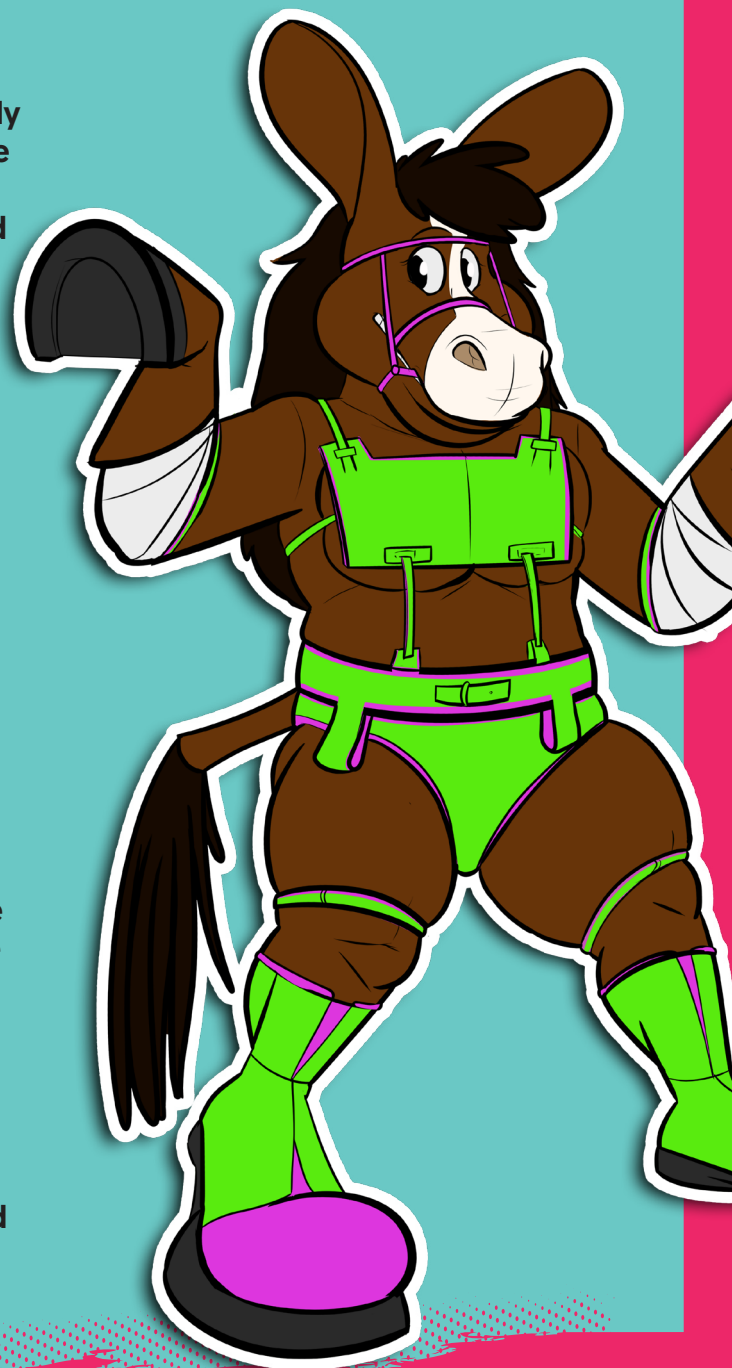
As our survey data confirmed, and as is unfortunately common at Furry events, the vast majority of people at Pawsome were cisgender men. A number of attendees who don't fall into that category reported feeling a little isolated as a result.

Next year, we'd like to hold a meetup near the beginning of the con for (and hosted by) women and non-binary and transgender people - and we'd particularly welcome a volunteer to organise and host it, so please get in touch if that's you.

Public Incursion:

There were a couple of instances of members of the public coming onto the hotel grounds despite them being closed for the weekend. As far as we're aware, these were all walkers or cyclists coming in via footpaths through the woods, rather than up the main driveway. Signs were also positioned on these paths, but apparently they were either missed or disregarded. The hotel have told us they will make more positive arrangements on these paths next year.

We don't believe that any actual problems resulted from this, and the trespassers were quickly removed in each case.



Gender Identity & Pronouns:

A couple of people reported being misgendered by staff or volunteers. This is not acceptable to us. We probably relied too much on the assumption that people drawn from our community would already be alert to such things – but next year not only will we be looking at providing badges (should someone wish to wear one) that states the person's identity – as well as having pronouns as misgendering as an agenda point in our staff briefing so all staff and volunteers are reminded to take this seriously and compassionately.

Volunteer Workload:

One attendee was worried that a shortage of volunteers meant that those remaining didn't have time to take part in all the events. We've already done a volunteer feedback exercise and this wasn't raised as an issue, but of course we want our volunteers - and staff - to enjoy the con without being on duty all the time.

The only solution here, of course, is for more people to volunteer and help spread the load! We'll be putting out a call for volunteers in the run up to Pawsome 2025, so please do consider stepping up to help. No experience is needed and we can find a way for anybody to contribute; the convention only exists because of your fellow community members giving their time.

Inappropriate Badge:

A couple of people told us about a concerning badge being worn at the con. We apologise for not noticing at the time and we can confirm that it has been dealt with and will not be repeated. While our code of conduct does state that inappropriate imagery is not allowed, we will also update our code of conduct to make it clearer that such badges are not allowed at Pawsome.

Room Temperature

Someone said they were cold in the evening in the lounge due to the doors being left open. At the meeting to discuss the feedback, several of us agreed that we were cold too, but assumed this was being done on purpose, perhaps to benefit fursuiters. It turned out that nobody had decided to keep the lounge cold, the doors had just been left open from earlier in the afternoon when it was warm, with nobody taking the initiative to close them.

We won't make this exact mistake next year, but we'll probably make others. The lesson is, if you think something might have been missed, please do mention it!

Signage:

One specific example of first-con organisation fail was signage. We'd planned to arrive at the hotel with a stack of large pre-printed signs to help people navigate the maze, but this got missed among a lot of other last-minute jobs. The signs you did see were instead knocked up on Friday afternoon on the hotel's office printer - hopefully they helped, but they were absolutely not as good as we'd intended.

Next year's signs should be bigger, easier to read, nicer to look at, and based on experience of where people particularly struggled this year.

Function Room Access:

There was some confusion - even amongst staff - over whether the rooms where panels were held were meant to be available for attendees to use when convention events weren't scheduled.

The policy on this will be firmed up and communicated more clearly in time for next year. Because rooms are sometimes used to store equipment, or pre-stage it for future events, and because we need to make sure rooms are left in a fit state for the next scheduled activity, it's unlikely that we'll be able to leave everything open for people to simply wander in. But hopefully we can accommodate requests for ad-hoc use added to gaps in the schedule at short notice.

General Organisation:

There were a lot of comments, both general and specific, about planning and organisation. This wasn't a surprise to us - though thank you for confirming our impressions. With an all-new staff who'd mostly not worked together before, at a new venue, with no previous iteration to copy, naturally some things didn't get done as well as we'd have liked. There isn't really much to say in response except that "practice makes perfect" - we think we did OK for a first year, and we hope to do better in future.

Mainstage Sightlines:

In future we'll avoid putting the movable Pawsome banners in the audience section at large events. Sorry for blocking your view.



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Internet:

This has already been raised with the hotel, who acknowledged that their WiFi wasn't working as it should. One of our staff tested the building's upstream connection during the con and confirmed that that was ok, the problem is with their equipment on site. We are told this is being upgraded during the first half of next year, so fingers crossed things should be better at Pawsome in October.

Disabled / Gender Neutral Toilet:

One consequence of the Peak being awkwardly located is that apparently a lot of people used the single Disabled toilet (also signposted as "Gender Neutral" during the con) as a changing room or for other unsuitable purposes.

Please do not do this. We did have a number of disabled attendees ("disabled" does not just mean "in a wheelchair") who were inconvenienced by misuse of this toilet. We'll be improving signage next year, but this mostly comes down to you, our attendees doing the right thing.

Fursuit Lounge / Changing Area:

Some people made the point that the Peak location wasn't ideal. We knew this going in, but there just aren't that many rooms available downstairs and close to the events. For next year we will have another look at alternatives, possibly subdividing another space, but rather than promise we can deliver something we can't – we've rather be honest and say that for now, in the current hotel we are in, we will most likely struggle to find a better area to host this.

Someone pointed out that it needs a mirror - quite right, and we'll fix that. We already have one in the Pawsome equipment store.

The individual changing tents were a bit cramped for larger people and/or fabulous costumes. We'll do something different next year, depending on where it ends up, based more on partitions and/or curtains rather than freestanding tents.

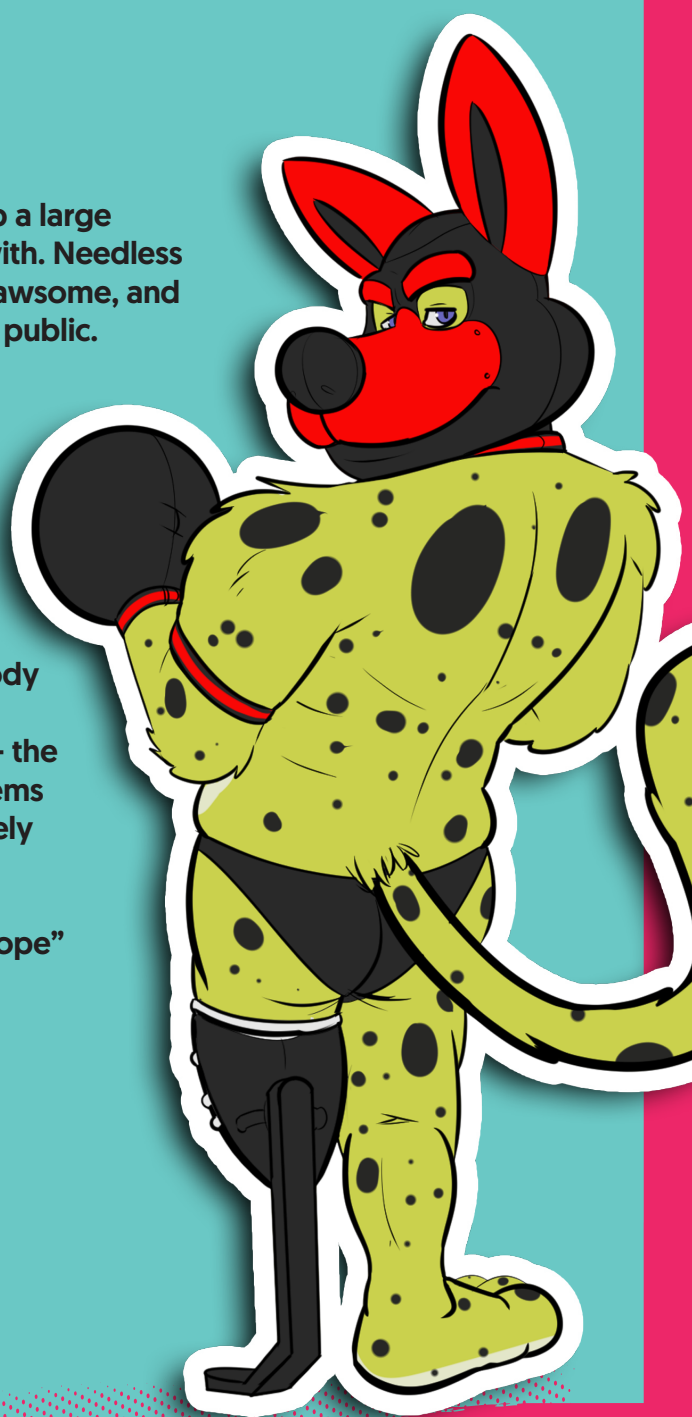
Hookup Board:

Also on the subject of sex, somebody wanted to put up a large noticeboard in Reception to help find people to play with. Needless to say, this is very much not how we want to present Pawsome, and we will not be displaying a physical "sex bucket-list" in public.

Icecream Van and Bouncy Castle:

Inspired by the beautiful weather on Saturday, somebody suggested having an icecream van at the con. This will probably guarantee a weekend of solid rain next year - the unpredictability of the weather is one of several problems with this idea, but we did agree to look into it. Absolutely no promises, though.

The bouncy castle that was also suggested is a solid "nope" for insurance reasons, I'm afraid.



Condoms and Sanitary Products:

A couple of people suggested that Pawsome should provide condoms. This genuinely didn't occur to us beforehand because in our definition of Pawsome it is not a sex event, but more an event to promote the fact that just because you are in rubber or a pup hood doesn't mean you can't socialize in it and make friends in a non-sexual surrounding. But of course, it would be silly to pretend that people aren't having sex in their bedrooms (and only in the bedrooms).

As a general principle, if you expect to need condoms you should bring them with you rather than rely on finding them when needed. But inevitably people may forget, or get luckier than they expected. The hotel toilets have machines where you can purchase condoms, so in future ConOps will have packs of condoms and lube available on request if you're caught short. Thanks for the suggestion.

One person made a similar suggestion regarding sanitary products. We'd be happy to do this, but we've since learned that the hotel apparently has these available already free of charge (as well as single-use shaving kits, toothbrush & paste kits, etc). So if you need this sort of thing in future please either ask the hotel staff directly, or speak to ConOps who can contact them for you.

Outside Space:

We had several suggestions for making more organised use of the transparent pods, for example scheduling smaller events there, or bringing in a marquee to add much-needed event space. These are solid ideas which we'll definitely take into account in next year's planning.

Simply holding scheduled events outdoors was also suggested, no doubt influenced by the lovely weather we had on Saturday this year. Sadly we can't rely on that, so we can't really plan to make too much use of the outdoor space without shelter. Someone made the point that in considering increasing ticket numbers in future, we need to allow for the situation where bad weather keeps everybody indoors the entire time, which will feel more crowded than this year did. That is of course a valid point.

Event Suggestions:

We received a lot of suggestions for future events. We're not going to respond to each suggestion here, but they have been added to a list to consider next year. That said, if you have an idea for an event you want to run, please also send it in when we open for event submissions next year, don't treat your feedback survey entry as equivalent. Apart from anything else, the feedback is anonymous so we won't know who to talk to!

We realise that communication with attendees who submitted events wasn't always the best this year. Changes have been made to improve that in future.

Apparently not everyone was aware that we asked for event submissions this year, so we'll try to make sure that's advertised better too.

Opening and Closing Ceremonies:

Some people thought the Ceremonies could do with a bit more flair, and we agree. More was planned - not joking, we still have the flammable stage props in the Pawsome stores - but both Flux and Volka had some significant real-life events rob them of prep time in the run up to the con. That said, even as an off-the-cuff talk rather than a stage show, it seems most people found it worthwhile.

With our “Movies and TV” theme next year, we hope to bring a little more showbiz sparkle to the Opening and Closing.

Bite, Bark, or Hump:

This was very popular, but felt rushed towards the end. If Trek wants to run it again next year, we'll assign a two-hour timeslot and let the story play out to a more natural end somewhere in the second hour. We're also considering whether it needs a bigger room.

Group Photo

This was originally scheduled in the Safari Park just before dinner on Sunday, but was moved to Saturday to take advantage of the weather and have the beautiful hotel building behind us instead of a bland function space. This certainly improved the picture (and meant the attendees didn't get wet), but the short notice of the move unfortunately meant that some people (including a number of staff) didn't hear about it in time and are not in the photo.

Next year we'll plan from the outset to have the photo outside if possible, and to decide the timeslot flexibly based on the forecast. By making that decision earlier (even before the start of the con if the weather seems stable) instead of as a last-minute change-of-plan, we should be able to give much more notice of the photo time even if it isn't printed in the con book. Improved WiFi should also help people keep track the Pawsome Announcements telegram channel for this kind of thing.



Inflatable Suits:

A number of people wanted to try on an inflatable suit, or ride a pool toy, but were unable to. We definitely recognise your descriptions of the event as chaotic and confusing. This came down to two problems.

Firstly, most of the loan suits which Candy Coated sent for people to try on, were unfortunately held up in Customs at Heathrow, arriving too late for the con.

Secondly, we were simply overwhelmed by the size of the event! We didn't ask in advance how many would be bringing inflatables, but we thought it was a niche interest that might attract two or three people with suits and a few more curious to see them, resulting in a small casual group with no need for signage or a trying-on queue or assigned helpers. We didn't expect the noisy floor-filling rubber and PVC menagerie that developed, and we were not well-equipped to deal with it.

Now that we understand the scale of the demand, we'll put more organisation into next year.

Nerf Gun Battle:

This feels like becoming a Pawsome signature event, and weather permitting we plan to do it again next year.

Somebody said they felt left out because they didn't have a Nerf gun - we actually had several loaner guns purchased by the con, and more which belonged to attendees who were willing to lend them. As far as we're aware, there was always a gun available to anybody who wanted to join in and several did; we'll try to publicise this aspect better in future.

Community Safari:

In our review meeting, Volka described this as "a lovely romantic idea of togetherness that didn't quite work out". We agree with the feedback regarding a lack of focus, and will try something different next year.

Diawl's pony-play presentation being folded into the Safari was an attempt to add some substance to the pony section of the event, but clearly a standup talk wasn't well suited to that environment. Any similar panel in future will get its own space.

Bring and Buy:

The Bring and Buy was popular but people raised some practical concerns which we generally agree with.

Next year we're thinking of making it more integrated with the Dealers' Den, so it will run longer and be more visible and hopefully popular. We expect that having seen it this year will also encourage more people to bring goods to sell next year.

Dealers' Den:

The main change we want to make to the Den next year is to greatly increase the floor space - we very much agree with all the comments saying it was too cramped, and related problems like the Pawsome merch desk being hard to find. More space will also allow us to host more dealers, and we've made a list of the various suggestions for types of wares that you'd like to see. Of course, this does depend on which dealers apply to sell at Pawsome next year - feel free to suggest it to any you know whose products would fit in.

Story Time:

A number of people said this was too late for them. It was scheduled to be the final event on the timetable each day, but with the dances going on till the early hours this did push it well past some people's bedtime. We'll move it earlier next year, recognising that a lot of the people who want to cuddle teddy and listen to stories are not raving till 2am anyway.

Samuel L Jackson will not be returning, that joke should have been put to bed after the first night.

Roomshare Issues:

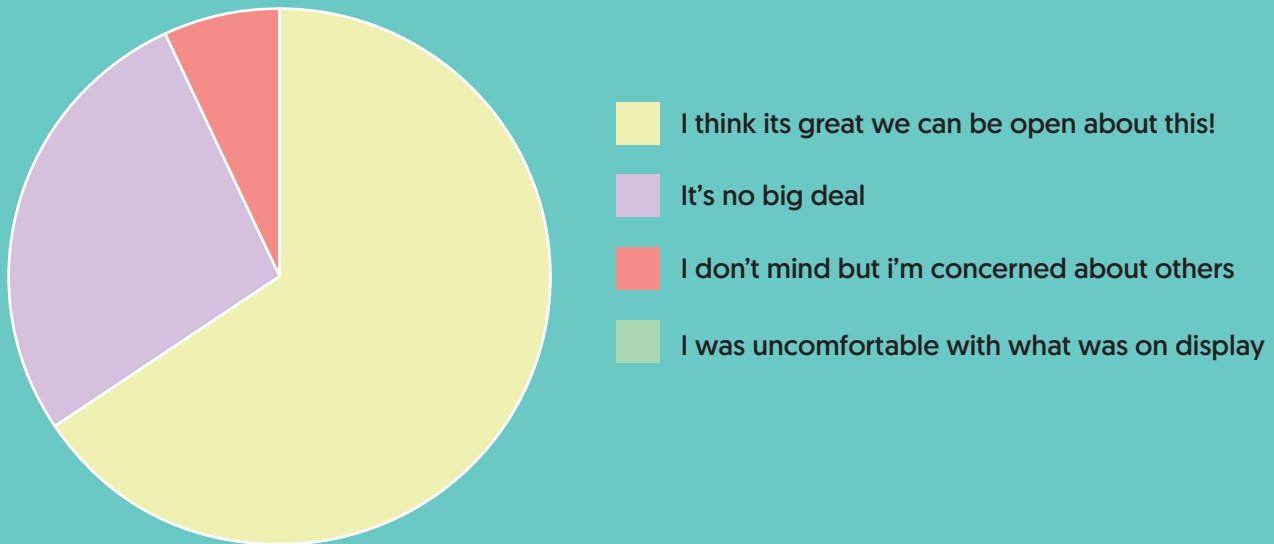
This year, alongside the majority of standard room registrations, we offered a small number of individual places in shared rooms. We're aware of a couple of cases where the arrangements weren't ideal, which we tried to deal with on-site, but with a full hotel there was a limit to what we could change. Thanks for bearing with us.

Due to anticipated demand, we don't expect to offer single residential places next year - everybody will need to arrange their own room-share and sign up as a group - so this shouldn't happen again.

NSFW Dealers and Bring-and-Buy:

We asked what people thought about the NSFW dealers at the den, and the response was overwhelmingly supportive, with nobody saying they were uncomfortable with what was on display:

How did you find having NSFW dealers?



We also had quite a few written comments along similar lines.

However, for some reason the view of the Bring and Buy was more mixed, with a couple of people disliking the intermingling of sexual items with other goods. So for next year, we're considering whether to designate a "NSFW end" of the room - a firm decision has not yet been made, but whatever we decide would apply to both the Dealers' Den and the Bring and Buy since it seems illogical to have different policies between them on this. We don't plan to have a physical barrier dividing the room, nor a strictly-policed list of items required to be in one area or another, but rather a general principle that, the more overtly sexual a product is, the further towards a certain side of the room it belongs.

Food Plans:

We had a mixed bag of feedback when it came to food at Pawsome - some people liked having it all included and felt it was good value for money whereas other people felt that the addition - specifically if bought during the convention was costly. We will be working on a new system for next year that will allow for greater choice on the day.