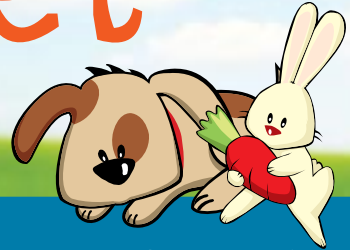


i-Pet



Responsible Pet Ownership Ambassador Newsletter

January 2012 issue



If one wishes to know love, one must live love, in action.

- Leo Buscaglia



Hello all! The passing of Christmas and the dawn of a new year call for the translation of love into action. We believe that you, our readers, have the power to create a better environment for pets. All you need to do is to take the first step.

In this issue, we enter the world of animal lovers who put their passion to work towards better animal welfare. As they open their doors to us and inspire us with their stories, we hope that you will also be spurred on to improve the lives of either your pet or other animals that also require love and affection!

Let us also set our pet resolutions as we embark on a new journey and year of our lives. We have created Resolution Lists for you to use - have fun! Here's wishing you and your pet a fantastic year ahead!

Yours sincerely
Sean Low & Andrea Teo*
Editors

*Andrea is a student from Ngee Ann Polytechnic who is interning with us as a writer and editor for this issue of the RPO Ambassador Newsletter.



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Andrea Teo | Sean Low | Sherry Nee | Ahmad Hafiz | Nicole Liang
Low Bo Kai | Joscelin Sun | Dr Joanna Khoo | Dr Choo Li Nah

Pet Resolutions

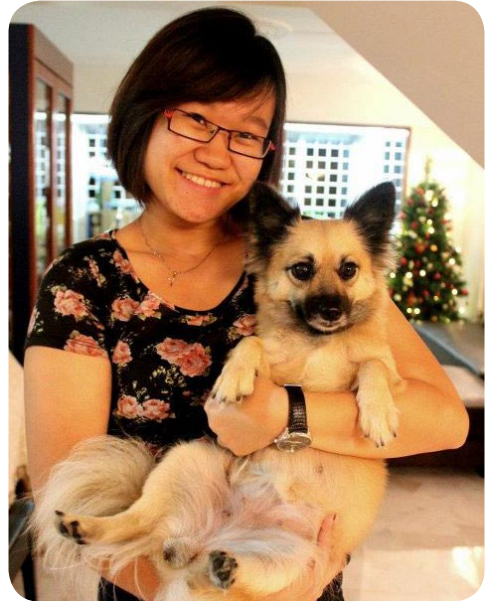
Every new year calls for new resolutions and changes. We make lists of things that we want to do in the year, with optimism that we will carry them out as planned. These vary from small personal lifestyle choices to great ambitions. This year, how about including some that will concern your pet? As an owner, you have the power to make resolutions that impact them in positive ways. Having a pet is a lifetime commitment, so make the best out of your relationship with your pet by including them in your positive resolutions! Even if you don't have a pet, you might want to think about how you can work with other animals.

Resolutions for pet owners

Integrating your pet into the neighbourhood

There may be people who do not feel comfortable with animals in the community and complain frequently about dog barking or pet poop. Thus, ownership responsibility will help to build an understanding between both parties. Here are some actions that you can take:

- Always bring a plastic bag to clean up your pet's poo when you are in public areas because leaving it on the ground creates risk of infection for people and dogs.
- Apply appropriate techniques to train your dog from barking unnecessarily. For example, it may bark when it is bored and needs attention.
- Give it a treat when it has quietened to let it know that it has behaved appropriately.
- Make sure that your dog is leashed when it is out to prevent any unforeseen incidents.
- Remember to have your pet sterilised. You will be doing your part to control the number of abandoned or unwanted animals.



Keeping a healthier, happier pet

- Exercise with your pet! This not only keeps your pet healthy, it is also a great way to bond with your pet. For more information on what bonding activities you can do, refer to page 12.

- Join a community of animal lovers to get to know other like-minded people to share experiences and gain tips!
- Give your pet a nutritious diet for healthy growth and energy.
- Bring your pet for regular check-ups and change your pet's litter box daily to prevent potential illnesses and minimize the risk of medical complications.

Resolutions for non-pet owners

Turning your passion into action this year

As pet owners do their best to be considerate pet owners, you can play your part too! Be an RPO Ambassador and encourage tolerance among other non-pet owners and educating them about pets and their behaviour. This will help to establish a mutual understanding between the two different parties.

- Take time to observe the animals in your neighbourhood. Have they been sterilised? Are they being given the best care? It is time for you to take action and display your creativity! As an RPO Ambassador, you can initiate a RPO-related project or participate in RPO events to educate more people on the benefits of sterilisation and the importance of kindness to animals.
- If you have always thought about spending some time with animals, go for it! You will be surprised at how rewarding an experience it

can be. One way will be to volunteer (read up on the enriching volunteering experiences of some volunteers over at page 5!). With the number of unwanted pets, shelters are in need of manpower. Check out AVA's website to see its different partners for a clearer idea on where to volunteer at.

- If you are unable to work with animals directly, you can help by making a donation to animal welfare organisations or private animal groups. These donations need not come in monetary form, but would also be pet food, clothing or other pet-related materials.



“ There are many things you can do as an RPO Ambassador or as an animal lover. Start thinking about the great things that you can achieve and list them down in the resolution list that have been specially provided in this issue. ”



My Pet - Resolutions List

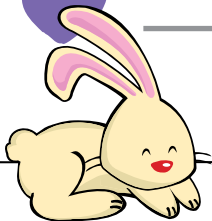














Going The Extra Mile

When you realise that you are passionate about an issue or a particular cause, where can you channel that energy to? Or if you decide that you need to stand up for something wrong that you have seen or heard about, what do you do? One of the best ways is to volunteer. When you first think of the word 'volunteer', there is a vague and selfless notion to it as the action of volunteering has no monetary terms attached to it. Read on to find out more and let these volunteers' stories inspire you!

Christine Bernadette and Marcus Tan are long-term volunteers of Animal Lovers League (ALL), a non-profit organisation that provides food and shelter to abandoned dogs and cats. Even though both animal lovers have full-time occupations - Christine is a teacher and Marcus works at a vet clinic - they do not hesitate in caring for the 600 pets at Pets Villa located at Pasir Ris. Growing up with pets fostered their love for animals and they decided to put that love in action by volunteering at ALL.

They are at the shelter thrice a week and are busy the moment they set foot in the place. On a typical weekend, they start at 11.00 am and wash and clean the shelter grounds, bathe the dogs, clean up poo, prepare food for the animals and walk them until about 6.00 pm. In spite of the many tasks to complete, Christine and Marcus still make sure that they spend some time giving the animals attention and affection. They also take new volunteers





on a tour around the shelter, briefing them about their duties. One can only imagine the amount of energy they put into doing their best for the animals!

However, it has not always been a smooth-sailing journey. When they first started, they were overwhelmed by the large number of dogs and cats that were there. As time passed, a sense of familiarity began to grow and they were soon used to the big group of animals. Christine even mentioned that she is able to remember the names and recognise the personalities of all the pets- not an easy feat indeed! However they feel that their biggest challenge is managing one's time properly. Indeed, holding full-time jobs and volunteering thrice a week is not easy.

Despite the difficulties, there is a sweet outcome that they had not anticipated - a common passion for animals brought them together as a couple. Christine shared, "We don't go to movies together. We spend time together here." The couple then went on to describe an unforgettable experience that they shared through volunteering - a normally active husky went missing as it became terrified and slightly withdrawn after being adopted into a new home. Together with some volunteers, Christine and Marcus searched for three days for him before they finally found him. Experiences like these and the heart-warming cases of animals that get adopted fuel their passion as volunteers to keep taking care of these animals.

Besides giving their time to the pets at Pets Villa, Christine and Marcus have also volunteered at Soi Dog Foundation in Thailand, a non-profit organisation that gives



help to unwanted and abused dogs and cats. The couple is looking forward to offering their services there once again in the near future.

Besides Christine and Marcus, we also feature in the next few pages a Q&A interview session with three volunteers of Animal Concerns Research & Education Society's (ACRES) to shed some light about what inspired them to volunteer and their valuable experiences gained through volunteering.





Passion leads to volunteerism

What better way to show an example of irrepressible youthful energy than to present a sharing session that was done with three student volunteers from Animal Concerns Research & Education Society (ACRES). ACRES is a registered charity as well as an animal protection organization that aims to promote animal welfare. Candid and enthusiastic, polytechnic students Claudia Ang, Dawn Peh and Sylvia Kwa tell us what being an ACRES volunteer entails:



Q: What made you want to volunteer with ACRES?

Claudia: I have wanted to volunteer since I was 13 to get experience in the field. I decided to give it a shot after I saw an ACRES tin can at one of the road shows.

Dawn: After watching “Sharkwater” (a documentary film by Rob Stewart about shark exploitation), I knew that I had to do

something for animals that were treated unfairly. So I went looking for a local animal welfare group online, found ACRES and signed up straightaway.

Sylvia: Dawn shared with me what ACRES was doing and I started volunteering in February, specifically with the Humane Education for All Life programme (HEAL).

Q: Did you feel any apprehensions when you first started volunteering?

Claudia: Not much, but there was the fear of being rejected by the public when I volunteered during flag days or as a mascot during roadshows.

Dawn: I was rather apprehensive when it came to talking to people at the ACRES roadshows, because it was my first time approaching people to talk about animal issues. I was also a little worried about working with the staff of ACRES because of my lack of knowledge.

Sylvia: Definitely. Other than having two cats currently, my knowledge of animals is rather minimal. But that’s the thing about volunteering - you learn as you volunteer. I felt quite insecure about having insufficient knowledge to talk to people. I realised that people did not want to listen to walking encyclopaedias. Instead, they are more interested in engaging us in a casual conversation. Besides, sharing too much information may make us seem like aggressive volunteers or animal rights activists.



Q: What does a volunteer do?

Claudia: We volunteer at roadshows, do administrative work, assist in animal care – clean animal enclosures and prepare food, and also volunteer in the HEAL programme where talks or skits are presented.

Q: What are some of the challenges you have faced thus far in volunteering? How did you overcome them?

Claudia: It is important to be more “animal conscious” and have the ingrained awareness of leading a “cruelty-free lifestyle” for the benefit of the environment as well as wild and domesticated animals. Also, it involves understanding that some choices you make may result in dire consequences to the environment. Ultimately it is up to the volunteers’ charisma to at least try to change the public’s mind-set. Sometimes it may seem fruitless, but it’s good to know that we have, in a way, created awareness among the public. That is what matters.

Dawn: Getting the public to see the animal issues from another perspective. For example, many people have differing views about the dolphin campaign.

Although rejections from people may be depressing at times, they are just disappointments that end with me. We need to realise that we have to be the voices for the other beings on Earth other than humans. We can either destroy them all, or be the ones who salvage the situation. Thinking that way keeps me going.

Sylvia: Sometimes I feel that the people who are most difficult to talk to are not strangers but the people closest to me, like my parents, siblings and best friends.

I remember that I once missed my weekly family dinner because of a volunteering event and that made my parents slightly unhappy. I feel that the older generation is quite pessimistic about the animal rights issues in Singapore. While they feel that it is good thing that I volunteer, they also think that the dolphin campaign is going to be a failure. They even advised me not to be carried away with volunteering. That posed a problem for me as I thought that my parents have always encouraged me to fight for what I believe in. I have stopped talking much about the issue with my parents since then.

My close friends also felt I was getting too carried away when I talked to them about cruelty, abuse and death of animals. These soon became taboo topics that we just don’t talk about anymore. In a way, it is important to know when to stop talking about these issues.



Q: Share with us the most memorable experience you've had.

Dawn: Volunteering helped me realise the power of an individual. There is actually so much one can do for other people and living beings on earth. It is a pity how many people always give excuses such as "The matter is too big and the change is too small".

Sylvia: Once, I was sharing animal welfare information with a group of undergrads but they merely stood there looking very bored and said nothing at all. In the end, I gave them a pamphlet to round off the conversation. In my opinion, the silent group of people will be influential only if they are aware of many issues and are willing to speak up. Volunteering with ACRES has exposed me to different people from all walks of life.

Q: Are there any plans that you have with regards to volunteering or working with animals in future?

Claudia: I am now pursuing a diploma in Veterinary Technology and I would like to pursue a related course in university. After that, I would like to work in a veterinary clinic.

Dawn: I intend to bring the dolphin campaign to Ngee Ann Polytechnic since many of our peers support the cause too. However, it is not a done deal yet due to certain complications.

Sylvia: While I really enjoy volunteering with ACRES, I think what is important is to channel this spirit of volunteering into whatever we do. Sharing with people about issues can take place anytime and I think it takes just a bit of effort to inform the people around you about the issues.



The zest in these youthful volunteers is not only inspiring but also admirable. Despite the initial jitters and the set-backs, they show no sign of giving up on what they believe in. Volunteering does not only give the individual a whole new experience, but it also contributes to the society. Do not hesitate anymore, volunteer today!

“Knock Knock, Who’s There?”

During the holiday periods we indulge in great fun and spend time with our loved ones. Sometimes we make plans for activities like meals or movie marathons, or go on family trips abroad. While we busy ourselves with these plans, what happens to our pets then?

As we plan for an exciting holiday, let us not forget our very own pets. Is it going along on the holiday with you? If the answer is yes, what arrangements do you need to make? If it is not going abroad with you, who will be responsible to take care of it? Alternatively, are there activities that we can organise for our pets if we choose to spend our holidays at home?

Bringing your pet with you on holiday

If your pet is going on a holiday with you, you need to plan in greater detail and specifically for your pet. There are many guidelines to adhere to with regard to bringing your pet onto the airplane or ferry as well as it entering the designated country. To comply with the guidelines, you are required to have the necessary documents like your pet’s health certificate to ensure that your pet is healthy enough to travel. An Acclimation Certificate is also required, which allows airlines to transport dogs and cats when they cannot guarantee compliance with animal welfare regulations.

Before taking your pet overseas, be sure to check that the accommodation you are going to stay in is pet-friendly. This includes factors like pet food being provided, areas for pets to be in while owners are away and services like walks to be provided by professionals. Bear in mind that your pet may display unusual behaviour because of its unfamiliarity with the environment. Therefore, do your best to make it feel as comfortable as possible by bringing it for short walks or car trips. While having a good vacation, do not forget about the little ways of responsible pet ownership!



Leaving your pet at home

Always remember that it still needs to be taken care of in your absence – its litter box changed, being fed new food daily, and being given attention. Most people, especially owners of small animals such as rabbits, hamsters and

chinchillas, have the misconception that as long as there is enough food and water in the cage, the pet will survive. However, a pet requires more than just food and water. It also requires attention and care. In your absence, there may be a change of behaviour in your pet and your pet may not feel emotionally secure.

Never leave your pet alone in the house when you go away for a vacation. Seek the help of a trusted friend to take care of it while you are gone, and inform them of the details of your pet's care routine and character. Should there be no one who can help, turn to reliable professional sitters or centres that offer boarding services. Before entrusting your pet to them, tour the premises to ensure that the centre operates efficiently and professionally. If you still cannot decide on one particular place, seek the opinions of other pet owners whom you may know. For a list of such registered boarding kennels, you can visit the Agri-Business website at www.agri-biz.com. You can also find a checklist of items to look out for at Pet Central, under "Home Sweet Home" at www.petsforlife.com.sg.

Staying home with your pet

Instead of going for a trip overseas, soak up the festive atmosphere and do things that you have never done before with your pet. If you have a dog, bring it out for walks at different places for unusual sights and sounds. You can check the Internet for dog cafes and hangouts that have sprouted in Singapore recently. In celebration of the festive season, you can get a new toy for your pet. Not only do dogs appreciate this gesture, but so do cats and rabbits, who love

to explore new things. If you are looking for a way to spread the festive cheer to others who are less fortunate, you may want to look at volunteering opportunities for pet-assisted therapy with your pet.



Remember, whatever your choice may be, be a responsible pet owner and never leave your pet alone in the house!



A Bond Like No Other

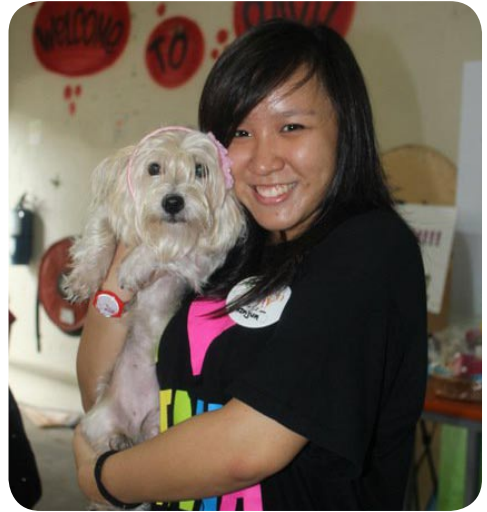
I am sure many of you know Scooby Doo and Snoopy. Although the two dogs have different personalities, one desiring food all day and the other living in his own world of thoughts and feelings, they never forget their owners and continually show love and loyalty. For centuries, there have been many heart-warming stories of the remarkable bond that exists between owners and pets and these remind us of the possibility of a relationship between a domesticated animal and a human where basic values like trust and respect exist. Don't we all want to have a great and memorable bond with our pets? As long as we try, nothing is impossible. Here are some tips on how to do so:

Bonding with dogs

Building a bond is all about spending quality time together. This includes a purposeful training session. Training is a good bonding activity as patience and consistency are required throughout the session.

Like any other relationship, mutual respect is vital. Before trying to befriend or build a closer relationship with your dog, ensure that you establish a good set of ground rules. This includes letting it know that you are the leader and differentiating between positive and negative dog behaviour.

Animals cannot talk, so we should focus on the body language. Observe your dog's behaviour and you may be able to figure out what it is trying to tell you. There is a common misconception that using pain and fear will help to build an effective relationship and send out a clear



message on who the master is. However, that will only result in a restrained bond.

Through communication, you are building a much better bond based on mutual respect. Here is a summary of tips that can help build an intimate bond:

- Make an attempt to redirect the active energy that dogs usually have into something productive like exercise or teach it to work for its food.
- If the weather is good, make full use of it and go outdoors! Engage in appropriate and interactive games but be mindful of the rules and be flexible during the game. An example of a game an owner can play with its dog is Disc Dog, a game equivalent to Frisbee for dogs.
- Bring your dog out for a walk, which is a good form of exercise and enjoyment. However, do bear in mind the duration of your walks if your dog is still a little puppy.

- No matter how busy you are, always remember to spend a little of your time stroking it or giving it a gentle grooming session. Showing affection is the best way you can make your dog feel happy.

Bonding with cats



Contrary to common belief, it is possible for a cat to be affectionately bonded to a person.

To start off, allow your cat to settle into the new environment and do not force it to adapt. Thereafter, playing games with it can be a good way to start building a relationship. Although a cat is unlikely to be trained to

perform tricks, it can still go through basic training, which can also be an opportunity for you to spend quality time with your cat. Therefore, it is crucial that you be patient with it and refrain from having high expectations to be fulfilled within a short time.

These are some tips that will be useful:

- Engage in play sessions with your cat using a toy (e.g. a ball). Over time, you can change the variables of the game to keep your cat interested and enhance the session.
- Learn to respect your cat's preference for affection. Some cats like to be cuddled and some do not. Knowing what your cat likes will be the start of a healthy relationship.
- Give your cat treats every now and then as these rewards are signs of love and attention.
- Be consistent and patient with your praises and affections as cats take time to warm up to people.

These tips are simple things that you can do to build a closer relationship with your pet. This year, create a little change in your schedule to spend more time with your pet. The beginning may be difficult, but once you embark on this journey of bonding with your pet, the bond will last a lifetime.

A Feline-Loving Force to Reckon With

By Micah Sulit, Cat Welfare Society



Photo by: Chua Ju Wei Jeremy

Our community cats cannot defend themselves when complaints are filed against them, so somebody has to step in and try to settle the issue. Mediation can be tedious and daunting, and not a lot of people are up for it, but thankfully there are those like Suzana Sainol, who go the extra mile in making Singapore a better place for community cats.

Suzana has been a cat caregiver for four years. In May 2011, she rose to the challenge of being Cat Welfare Society's (CWS) official mediation officer on top of running her own spa and aromatherapy supplies business. She works with government agencies such as the AVA, HDB and Town Councils and liaises with complainants and caregivers. Her work also includes facilitating sterilisation rounds in areas that need them the most.

"It is not a fun position to be in as I am dealing with people most of the time and that can be very difficult," she explains. "But mediation is important and a rational approach is required to deal with various mindsets. Without mediation, the cats will have to be removed. Mediation also helps when most caregivers and feeders do not like communicating with authorities and complainants directly."

According to Suzana, the biggest challenge in mediation is dealing with people who are unwilling to listen or compromise in order to live together with the community cats, caregivers and feeders. "Some people are only concerned about complaining, but they do not want to do something concrete to resolve the situation." However, Suzana reaps the fruits of her efforts when there is a breakthrough in communication. For her, the rewards include increasing complainants' patience and tolerance, and helping people with different viewpoints come together and cooperate to achieve a mutual goal. "I am able to help people have a paradigm shift in their way of thinking—to understand and accept that our living space is not just catered for

human beings but also for other living things. Therefore, we should take humane steps in dealing with them,” she says.

Suzana added that she would love to see more volunteers taking on the challenge of mediation, which she explains as “an integral role in linking up all the stakeholders [in cat welfare].” Suzana covers neighbourhoods under the Moulmein-Kallang Town Council (MKTC), including Geylang Bahru, Boon Keng and Whampoa. Her work has also been expanding to areas under the Marine Parade and Potong Pasir Town Councils, such as Lengkong Tiga and Toa Payoh.

Suzana is definitely not alone in her efforts. In the West, community cat caregivers from different areas—including Choa Chu Kang, Bukit Panjang, and Bukit Batok—have formed a large and tight-knit network. They have worked tirelessly together with their MPs and done mediation work with complainants, cat owners and Town Councils. Their joint efforts have helped to settle issues more quickly.

“Hundreds of street cats have been sterilized and all complaint cases have been resolved,” shares Siau Li Chao Michelle, a caregiver for about seven years now. Networking has been a very valuable experience to the caregivers.

“We got to know like-minded people who shared our passion for improving the welfare of community cats,” says Choa Chu Kang-based Christina Ng, who has been a caregiver for over a decade. The team shares resources like cat traps and trades knowledge on medical care tips as well as trapping tactics for elusive kitties.

With such an enthusiastic spirit and connected by a strong network of mutual support, Suzana and the other community cat caregivers have contributed much to the community by not only saving the abandoned and stray cats but also changing peoples’ views and experiences of these harmless community cats. Their feline-loving efforts will continue to spread awareness of the implications of these cats and reach out to help them.



I am able to help people have a paradigm shift in their way of thinking—to understand and accept that our living space is not just catered for human beings but also for other living things. Therefore, we should take humane steps in dealing with them.



- Suzana Sainol



Save The Street Dogs

By Christine Bernadette, Animal Lovers League

Picture a dusty home with lorries revving back and forth together with the excruciating sounds of drilling and knocking by day. Not many would like to celebrate their festive season in a place like this. Unfortunately, such is the harsh reality faced by street dogs born under heavy vehicles and construction materials. Without direct care available, their chances of survival are low. Many of these street dogs are also displaced when there is a need to make room for new buildings, roads or parks.

With limited room and resources at Pets Villa, very little that can be done to help all these homeless dogs. However, we try to feed them as it pains us each time we see a motionless body of a dog in the middle of the streets.

We also try to find them homes by bringing them to adoption drives and placing advertisements about them online, but these efforts are not always successful. We have also been sterilising female street dogs to prevent the birth of unwanted litters.

With Christmas just over and Chinese New Year round the corner, the volunteers make an extra effort by going down to the shelter to clean the premises for the occasion. Nevertheless, they have not forgotten the street dogs. They know that constant care can only be provided for these dogs if they are placed in Pets Villa or adopted by loving people. When a person adopts a pet from the shelter, two lives are saved – the one that gets adopted and the street dog that will then have a place within the shelter.

As we do our part for these animals, we hope that the public will do the same by donating canned food or pet-care related materials like combs. Last but not least, the biggest help to us will be for the public to adopt a dog or cat from the shelter instead of buying one from the pet shop as these abandoned animals deserve as much love and care as any other pet dog.



Let us share with you the experience of street dogs which were born near the entrance of a busy construction. This can be the same plight faced by dogs whose owners abandon or do not sterilise their pets.

A litter of eight was born, immediately facing the risk of being run over or crushed to death. Indeed, and sadly, one puppy was run over by a lorry shortly after. Lucky stars soon began to shine on the remaining puppies as five of them were successfully re-homed and two others now await adoption in an available empty cage at Pets Villa. However, this does not mean that other street dogs or abandoned dogs share the same fortune.

We'd like to remind pet owners to sterilise their pets and if you have any enquiries about donation or adoption, please email us at general@animalloversleague.com. Help save the lives of street dogs and abandoned pets.

RPO Roadshow 2011

Did you catch us at the Responsible Pet Ownership (RPO) Roadshow held at the Singapore Expo on 12 and 13 November 2011?

The event highlights included:

Local animal welfare groups booths, workshops and presentations



Special thanks goes to our RPO partners for participating in the Roadshow! They have worked tirelessly to spread key RPO messages and educate the public on how to take good care of their pets!

- Action for Singapore Dogs (ASD)
- Animal Lovers League (ALL)
- Animal Concerns Research & Education Society (ACRES)
- Cat Welfare Society (CWS)
- House Rabbit Society Singapore (HRSS)
- Housing and Development Board (HDB)
- National Parks Board (NParks)
- Noah's Ark CARES (NAC)
- Singapore Kennel Club (SKC)
- Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)
- Jurong Bird Park (JBP)

Dog demonstrations, trials, try-outs and competitions



The activities were a huge draw! The crowd were treated to many amazing performances by the dogs of enthusiastic owners. It also represented a fantastic opportunity for dog owners to provide more exposure for their beloved pets!

Complimentary wellness checks by veterinarians



The vet clinic proved to be a popular crowd-drawing segment. Vets in private practice volunteered to provide complimentary pet wellness checks. Members of public left with valuable advice on how to take good care of their pets. The vet clinic was once again a success in promoting the importance of regular vet checks for pets as part of responsible pet ownership.

What's available at the Roadshow!

Candies given out after 6pm



We also gave out a sweet surprise to the public after 6pm on both days of the roadshow!

Our latest AVA Pet paper-crafts!



Our latest collateral caught the eyes of many who were keen to take up the challenge of assembling our pet papercrafts.

They were able to participate in our Pet Snap! - photography contest by taking a photo of it and submitting it to www.petsforlife.com.sg.

We received many creative entries from animal lovers and photo enthusiasts.

Turn over to page 21 to see the winning entries!

An event for the young and old



The RPO Roadshow catered to visitors of all ages. AVA rewarded goody bags to public members who completed our activity card by finding answers from our interactive displays.

Children were treated to fun activities by the participating organisations and Ngee Ann Polytechnic students, such as arts and crafts, balloon sculpturing, face painting, puzzles and more throughout the two days.

Ngee Ann Polytechnic students also performed puppet shows that taught children the message of not getting a pet on impulse. These puppet shows, developed as collaboration between Ngee Ann Polytechnic and AVA, will also be performed at the National Libraries in March 2012.

Family activities were also aplenty; students from Ngee Ann Polytechnic presented a game show in collaboration with AVA, drawing much family fun as the public pit their knowledge and speed against each other.



*Reflections from our Game Show presentors
- Ngee Ann Polytechnic's RPO student ambassadors*



Through the game show experience with AVA, we managed to have a taste of how it is like to prepare for an event. We had to manage duties such as taking charge of props, deciding where to place them on the stage, and planning the game to make sure it flows smoothly. If any problem was to crop up during the game show, we would have to think on our feet to come up with another plan that could solve it in the shortest time. Overall, we enjoyed the process very much though it made us realise that there is a lot more for us to learn and we are looking forward to gain even more learning experiences by participating in more RPO related activities.





Pet Snap! Photo Contest Nov 2011

Our latest Pet Snap! Photo Contest stands out from the previous three contests as we tested the creativity of participants through the use of our AVA pet papercrafts! For the first time, pet owners and non-pet owners were able to participate by sending in photos of their assembled AVA pet papercrafts in a creative setting which incorporates the theme "A Pet is for Life!"

Congratulations to the winners of our latest Pet Snap! Photo Contest. The winners walked away with fantastic cash prizes!

For those who have missed out this time around, stay tuned to Pet Central's website at www.petsforlife.com.sg for more contests and activities!

People's Choice



By: Leong Wim Lay

Judges' Pick



By: Teoh Cheng Leong Fabian



By: Ng G P



I have just purchased a hamster from a pet shop. This morning, I noticed that it is very lethargic with its back end wet, soiled and smelly. I also saw watery diarrhoea and some blood around its tail. It is also sitting in a hunched position. What has happened and what should I do?



From your description, it is advisable to take your hamster to a veterinarian immediately. While there are numerous factors that can cause these symptoms, it is highly possible that your hamster is suffering from “wet-tail” (also known as proliferative ileitis or transmissible ileal hyperplasia), caused by bacteria such as *Lawsonia intracellularis*, *Escherichia coli*, *Campylobacter* spp, etc. “Wet-tail” is a serious condition as death usually occurs within 24 - 48 hours.

Upon examination, the vet will likely prescribe antibiotics and oral anti-diarrhoeal medication. In addition, fluid replacements may be given to prevent dehydration which can occur because your hamster may not want to eat or drink.

When caring for your hamster, it is important that you practise good hygiene by ensuring that you wash your hands before and after you touch your hamster. Be sure to disinfect its cage and keep your hamster warm. Ensure that you keep the other hamsters away as “Wet-Tail” is a contagious disease. Due to the serious nature of this disease, be prepared for unfortunate news because treatment may not work for all hamsters.

Although wet-tail is a common disease that affects all hamsters, the Syrian hamster appears to be more susceptible. Stress can also increase chances of your hamster coming down with “wet-tail”. Hamsters are usually under stress during weaning (separation from their mothers) and when they are in a new environment (such as the move from the pet shop to home). Aim to prevent this disease by practicing good hygiene and keeping your hamster contented (such as providing bedding for it to hide in, a nice quiet place to stay and gentle handling). Give any new hamster a week or so before you handle it often or change its diet and take extra care with recently weaned hamsters.



If you have more questions on pet care or health, send them in to chong_poh_choo@ava.gov.sg with the Subject Heading: Ask the Vet! (Issue 14), or via fax to 6223 5383.



Do not abandon your pet

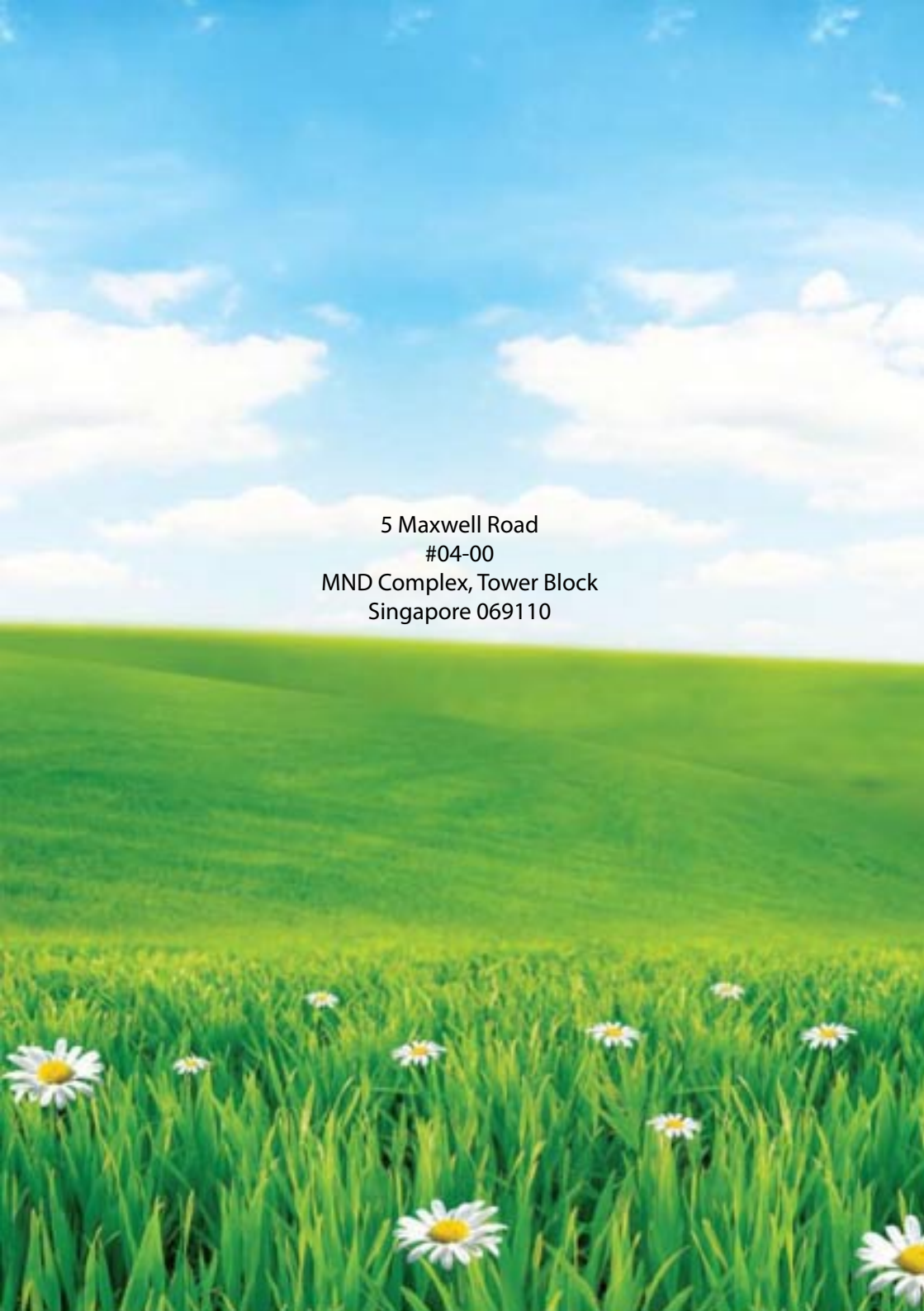


“ Oh no! It's the post-New Year refugees joining our stray club! ”

Sterilise your pet



“ Dad, if we don't do something soon, I'll have to drop out of school to be a full-time pet caregiver. ”



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