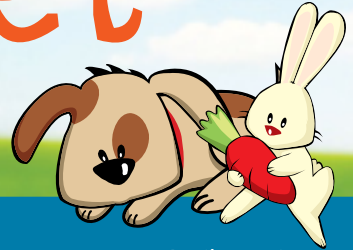


i-Pet



Responsible Pet Ownership Ambassador Newsletter

April 2011 issue



Easter Cheer!

Love the animals: God has given them the rudiments of thought and joy untroubled.

- Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881), Author of *Crime & Punishment*



With the period of Lent almost over, and Easter just around the corner, many of us are in the celebrative mood. As we welcome Easter with joy, let's also spare a thought for those less fortunate, especially those who suffered in the Japanese disaster. In this issue, we bring you some true stories of enduring love and friendship between pets and their owners in the face of turmoil.

While Japan is in our prayers, let's not forget to keep the festive spirit alive. It is a time for fun too and here's an idea: Instead of buying a real bunny for Easter, try your hands at "making" one! Check out our column on *Get Creative With Origami* and learn how.

For those with real bunnies, read on to find out why it is important to sterilise your pet and how to keep them cool under Singapore's warm weather.

Have a Happy Easter!


Adeline Chin
Editor

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Low Bo Kai | Joscelin Sun | Dr Lou Ek Hee | Dr Choo Li Nah

Disaster Reveals True Feelings of Pet Owners

The tragedy of the earthquakes and tsunami that hit Japan on the 11th of March may seem far removed from Singapore, but the actions and thoughts of the Japanese reflect much about humans, and our attitudes to the animals that depend so much on us.

In disaster-ravaged Japan, people and animals alike faced daily horrors after the earthquake and tsunami – death, injury, separation, starvation and lack of proper facilities are just a few of the difficulties that many of them had to cope with (read more on page 3).

Some depressing stories of pet abandonment have been making the round, with reports of how some animals were left to fend for themselves in the chaos before the tsunami.

However there has also been an equal number of heartwarming stories of people rallying around their pets. A recent rescue story described how a loyal dog was finally

reunited with its owner after spending three weeks adrift amidst the debris in the sea off Kesenuma, Miyagi Prefecture (excerpt on bottom).

These stories are a reminder of just how precious a life is, highlighting the helplessness of animals and emphasising the heavy responsibilities that pet owners shoulder. The natural disasters that hit Japan may not make it to Singapore shores, but it does not mean that our responsibilities here are any less. Some Japanese pet owners did not give up, even when they were faced with almost-impossible difficulties. Can we do any less?

In celebrating Easter, think twice before buying a pet. Weigh the lifetime commitment required. If you have the slightest doubt about your ability to commit so long (for decades sometimes), there are other ways to share your love for animals. Local animal welfare groups, for example, would welcome your help and warmth.

Rescued Dog Reunites With Owner

Excerpt extracted from Asia News Network, 6 April 2011



A dog rescued last week while floating on debris in the sea off Kesenuma, Miyagi Prefecture, had a happy

reunion with her owner Monday, more than three weeks after the March 11 earthquake and tsunami devastated the region.

Ban, a 2-year-old female, had been kept at the Miyagi prefectural animal care center in Tomiyamachi since being rescued by the Japan Coast Guard on Friday afternoon.

After Ban's owner, a woman from Kesenuma, and her daughter saw footage of Ban being rescued on TV, they went to the center to collect the family pooch.

Japan's Pet Survivors Face Post-Tsunami Struggle

Excerpt extracted from Agence France-Presse, 28 March 2011



Hungry, hurt and separated from owners who are either dead or in evacuation centres, hundreds of family pets are struggling to survive in the desolation of Japan's tsunami-ravaged northeast coast.

Many pet owners left their cats and dogs when the tsunami warning sounded, never imagining that the wave would be as large and powerful as it eventually was. The animals were left to fend for themselves in a hostile environment with no food or fresh water.

Japan Earthquake Animal Rescue and Support (JEARS), a hastily assembled coalition of animal welfare groups, has spent the last two weeks searching what's left of the worst-hit coastal towns.

The teams provide food and treatment for injured animals and try to find temporary shelters for those that have lost their owners.

They also visit evacuation centres where those people who escaped the tsunami with their pets are having trouble holding on to them in difficult, cramped surroundings where animals are not always welcome.

"Some people have pet allergies, and they complain that the dogs are barking and fighting. It's understandable."

There have been cases of people choosing to stay in their ruined houses because shelters refused to accommodate pets, and JEARS coordinator Isabella Gallaon-Aoki said it was difficult to persuade those in the centres that their animals would be better off in a temporary shelter.



People here see pets as family members. For some, after everything that has happened, their pet is the only thing they can cling on to -- the only thing that brings them comfort.



Timo Takazawa, who survived the tsunami along with her husband, refused to give up their dog, Momo, despite complaints from other evacuees in their crowded shelter in the city of Sendai.

"When we escaped from the tsunami we didn't take anything, just Momo," said Takazawa, 65. "I can't imagine not being here together. If anybody said to me I couldn't keep Momo here, we would leave with her, we would go somewhere else."

Heartwarming stories of survival aside, PETA's Fruno said that animal welfare groups would be busy in tsunami-affected areas for some time to come.

Easter Myths Busted

By Jacelyn Heng, President, House Rabbit Society (Singapore) (HRSS)



With Easter coming up and the launch of the new cute rabbit movie "Hop" many parents may find themselves buying young bunnies as gifts for their children. However, they may not have the right bunny care knowledge, or know if a rabbit would make a good pet for the young. This Easter, HRSS would like to share with you a few common myths about rabbits.

Myth: Rabbits make good pets and companions for children.

Fact: The natural exuberance of even the gentlest toddler is stressful for the sensitive rabbit. Children like a companion they can hold, carry, and cuddle. However, rabbits are not cuddly by nature because they are prey animals that feel frightened and insecure when they are held and restrained.

Myth: Rabbits are “low-maintenance” starter pets.

Fact: Rabbits can live up to 10 years, and require as much work as a dog or cat. When you want to get a rabbit, you must first bunny-proof your house to keep your wires out of reach from your pet.

Myth: Rabbits can be kept in cages the entire day.

Fact: Rabbits can be easily litter-trained, and are sociable animals that should live indoors in free roaming as part of the family. To let these sensitive, intelligent, social animals spend life in a cage is to miss the joy of sharing your life with a house rabbit.

If you think you would enjoy sharing your home with a rabbit, contact HRSS at www.hrss.net for information about adopting a rabbit. If you are unsure about making a lifetime commitment to a rabbit, how about getting a stuffed toy rabbit this Easter instead?

Let's make Easter a joyful time for our long-eared friends!

For families willing to make the long-term commitment, here are a few points to consider before acquiring a rabbit:

Housing: Bunnies need a roomy indoor space to call their own. There should be room for a litterbox, toys, food and water bowls. Playpens are a preferable alternative to the small cages sold in pet stores.

Playtime: Rabbits need plenty of exercise and should be allowed at least two hours of run in a rabbit-proofed area of the home per week.

Not outdoors: Rabbits should never be left outdoors. Those that are, are often forgotten and neglected. They are relegated to a life of “solitary confinement” and are subject to weather extremities as well as diseases spread by fleas, ticks, flies and mosquitoes.

Litter Box: Rabbits, once spayed or neutered, will readily use litterboxes that are placed in a corner of the rabbit's enclosure. It is preferable to use dust-free litter.

Diet: Bunnies need fresh water, one to two bowls of fresh green leafy vegetables, two tablespoons of plain rabbit pellets twice a day, as well as an unlimited amount of fresh green hay.

Health: Like dogs and cats, rabbits should be spayed or neutered to reduce the risk of cancer and urine spraying. Spayed and neutered rabbits live longer and healthier.

Grooming: Rabbits shed their coat 3-4 times per year. Use a flea comb to brush away excess fur.

A person who chooses a baby rabbit as a pet should:

- Have lots of time and a house that can withstand some chewing.
- Expect an unneutered/unspayed baby to spray urine on the walls. Neutering/spaying your baby rabbit (at four to six months) will stop the problem.
- Expect accidents when baby rabbits forget the location of the litterbox.
- Allow young rabbits at least 30 hours a week of free time outside its enclosure.

Get Creative With Origami!

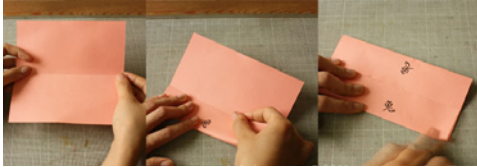
Instead of buying a rabbit, make one for your friends and family! Spread the Easter fun with your paper 'pet bunny'.

Here are a few simple steps to making a 'bunny' origami. Origami instructions and photos are reproduced with permission by YokeBakery.com (<http://www.yokebakery.com>). You can also find videos and a rabbit template there. All you need to get started is a piece of origami paper!

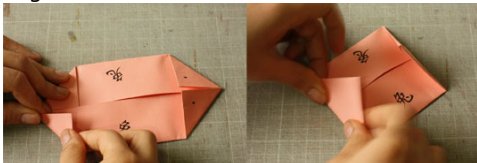
1 Begin by folding the origami paper in half, with the coloured side facing out. Once the paper is in half, the coloured side can be seen.



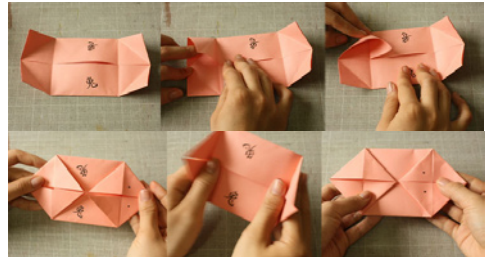
2 Unfold the paper, and fold both sides in towards the centre crease.



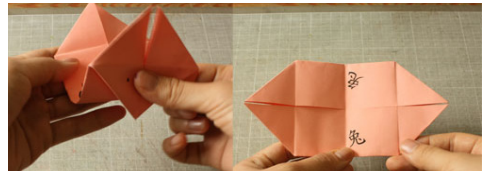
3 Fold all four corners towards the centre crease. After this, do a mountain-fold of the edges towards the centre.



4 Unfold and squash-fold all four corners.



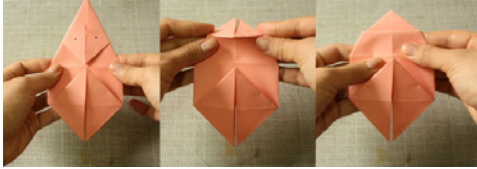
5 Fold the resulting two flaps over to the other side. Turn the model over and fold it in half to make a crease.



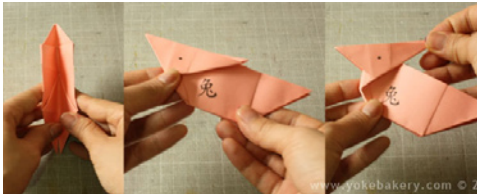
6 Make two valley folds on the empty side of the origami paper to form the rabbit's ears.



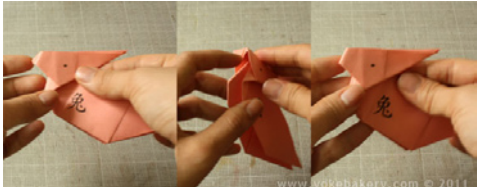
7 Flip the model over and mountain fold the head.



8 Valley-fold the model in half, and gently pull the "ears" of the rabbit away from the body. Press down and crease it so that the head 'stands up' straight.



9 Make a pre-crease on the rabbit's 'nose' and then do an inside reverse-fold.



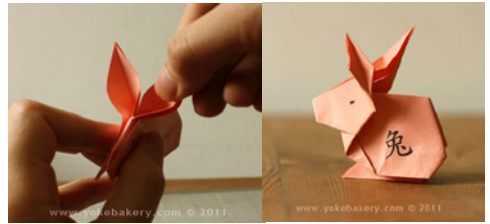
10 Pre-crease and make a reverse fold at the back end of the rabbit to form the 'legs' or the haunch of the rabbit.



11 Pre-crease and make another reverse-fold at the bottom back end of the rabbit to help it 'sit'.



12 Shape the rabbit's ears while holding onto the head firmly by pinching it together at the bottom of the ears.



And voila! There you have it – your very own rabbit to hug and spend Easter with!

Origami is the traditional Japanese art of paper folding. It sprung into existence in the 17th century, and became popular in the mid 1900s. Since then, it has evolved into a modern art form. Read on to understand what some common origami terms mean, and how they are used:

Mountain-fold Fold the top and/or right side of the origami paper towards the bottom and/or left side. Done correctly, the fold ends up on top (like this \wedge).

Valley-fold Fold the bottom and/or left side of the origami paper towards the top and/or right side. Done correctly, the fold ends up on bottom (like this \vee).

Meow! Please Sterilise Me!

By Nicole Liang with information from Veron Lau, Cat Welfare Society



My name is *Goodbye Kitty*. I came from a very large family. My Mummy and Daddy gave birth to eight kittens and I was the third baby.

Mummy was often tired and did not produce enough milk to feed all my brothers and sisters. Mummy said she wished our owner had brought her to a vet for sterilisation. That way, she would not have given birth to so many babies.

Before my youngest sister was one year old, our Mummy and Daddy were sent to be put down in a faraway place. I cried when I discovered this. Soon after, the rest of us were thrown out of the house by our owner.

All this happened because our owner could not afford to take care of so many of us. I know this is true because I often found there was not enough space to sleep in. My older siblings and I were always hungry since our owner did not buy us enough food. Starving, tired and grumpy, we would get into fights over the smallest things – one of my younger brothers even got a scar across his eye.

When we were abandoned, my siblings and I roamed the streets in hunger and shivered in

cold during rainy nights. Sometimes, we did manage to find food but these meals were irregular so we all suffered from malnutrition.

My youngest siblings became so weak that they soon died. My family of eight became smaller over time. After a while, only two of us were left.

Thankfully, a kind person finally adopted us into her warm and loving home. She gave us each a cosy bed to sleep in and we were always fed with yummy and nutritious food! Our new owner also brought us to a friendly vet who performed sterilisation for us. I heard the vet telling our owner that sterilisation is very important, because:

- It reduces hormone-related aggression and territorial fighting in cats
- It eliminates the risk of me and my sisters contracting ovarian and uterine cancers
- It decreases risk of breast cancer
- It eliminates risk of testicular cancer in my brothers

I love my new owner. When I meet other cats, I also share with them the advantages of being sterilised. I sure hope their owners understand the perks too!



RPO Student Ambassador Training



On a sunny morning on the 16th of March, 15 girls from Singapore Chinese Girls' School (SCGS) and Millennia Institute (MI) turned up bright and early.

The girls were at the Centre for Animal Welfare and Control (CAWC) for their first proper lesson on Responsible Pet Ownership (RPO), which will prepare them for AVA's RPO Student Ambassador Programme. Eager to be on board, they paid rapt attention to talks on the basics of responsible pet ownership, as well as on strays and the consequences of abandonment.

Interspersed between the talks were interactive, hands-on sessions where the girls were treated to a dog training demonstration and a pet-care practical session. The half—hour long dog training demonstration, conducted by veteran dog trainer Bernard from Awesome Pawsome, enthralled the students as they learnt the appropriate do's and don'ts of training their pet. While there were a few girls who were initially a little afraid of the large black Labrador, Tuxedo, they quickly overcame their fear upon seeing its warm and affectionate nature. A few of the braver ones even took a hand in walking Tuxedo around as part of the training demonstration!

The pet-care practical session also allowed many of the students to gain new insight into taking care of a pet. The girls divided themselves into teams to clean, groom and feed some of the small mammals, like rabbits, cats and hamsters, housed at the CAWC. For some girls, it was a brand-new experience and they had to learn quickly how to adapt to the cleaning, grooming and feeding.

Other than being equipped with pet care knowledge and practical tips, the students were also introduced to AVA's RPO Partners, such as the Cat Welfare Society (CWS) and Singapore Kennel Club (SKC). At the end of the session, the girls could opt to embark on a community service or project work track to help spread key RPO messages to the public. Many of them chose to volunteer their time to do both, and we hear from one of the students why:



After the training, I learnt that there were various reasons why pets were abandoned by their owners. Some owners lost interest after a period of time, while others realised that it was too much trouble looking after the pet. This is due to their lack of knowledge on how much responsibility it takes to be a pet owner. It is not easy as it requires a lot of time and effort to look after a pet. If one cannot afford the time, (s) he should not buy a pet on impulse. I will definitely share the valuable information that I have learnt from this training with my family and friends. This in turn, will allow them to pass on the message to others and raise awareness on responsible pet ownership – so that innocent lives will not be lost. - Jolin Tsoi, Sec 2 Courage (SCGS)



Bunny Mania!

With the support of the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA), the Science Centre welcomed the year of the hip hopper with a new exhibition on Rabbits – “Bunny Mania!”. This exhibition, which ran from 1 – 28 February, put a fresh spin on Responsible Pet Ownership. The public were treated to a mix of poster displays, and interactive rabbit-themed activities. The posters educated people on caring for their pets, while the activities included optical and unique zodiac animal shadow illusions that actively engaged them. The public could also peep into the many rabbit holes in the bunny warren exhibit to gain a better understanding of the world of the shy but social bunny.

To ensure members of the public walked away with a memorable experience, they were able to craft their very own personalized New Year's greetings at one of the exhibition's highlights, the light painting room and also collect AVA's “Care for your Pet” collaterals to take home as souvenirs!



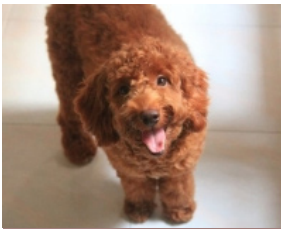
Pet Snap! Photo Contest Feb 2011

The Pet Snap! Photo Contest was brought back in February due to popular response from the public. This time around, we featured pets who 'celebrated the lunar new year'. We received more than 50 enthusiastic and creative responses, and here are the top 10 photos!

If you missed out on the contest this time around, do not worry! Pet Snap will be making a comeback in June with a new theme. For the latest information, check out Pet Central's website at <http://petsforlife.com.sg>. Exciting prizes await you!



By Sherie
(Money)



By Yap TianTian
(Muffin)



By Chan Jia Ling
(Twinkle)



By Soh Li Lin
(Coco)



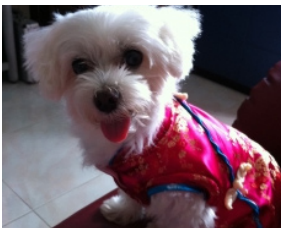
By Jan
(Poppy)



By Soh Yu Qi
(Wu Bao)



By Chan Buay Eng
(Furryball)



By Tan Bee Leng
(ahgirl)



By Chan Fong Fong
(Max Millie)



By Mavis Teo
(Samuel Boy)



I am always sweating because the weather in Singapore is so hot. It makes me feel so uncomfortable. Sometimes I even fall sick because of it. My bunny is so furry. How should I take care of it so that it doesn't fall sick because of the hot weather?



When the weather in Singapore becomes unusually hot and humid, it's important to learn how to keep your pets cool and dry so that they do not fall ill.

In a resting animal, heatstroke may occur under conditions of extreme heat and high humidity, when body heat cannot be dissipated. Lack of ventilation is a contributing factor, such as when an animal is kept in a car parked in the open with the engine off and the windows up. Animals subjected to forced activity under the sun can also get dehydrated and risk heatstroke. Owners who let their pets be subjected to heat stress may be committing an act of animal cruelty and are liable to prosecution.

Here are some simple precautions that you can follow to minimise the possibility of your pet suffering from dehydration, heat stroke and sunburn.

Be Aware Of the Symptoms!

According to Dr. Lila Miller, ASPCA Vice President of Veterinary Outreach, symptoms include: excessive panting or difficulty breathing; increased heart and respiratory rate; drooling; mild weakness; stupor or even collapse; seizures; bloody diarrhea; vomit; body temperature of over 104 degrees.

Animals with flat faces, like Pugs and Persian cats, are more susceptible to heat stroke since they cannot pant as effectively. These pets,

along with older or overweight animals, as well as animals with heart or lung diseases, should be kept cool and hydrated as much as possible.

Keep Them Cool and Dry

- Keep your pet out of the sun. If you keep your rabbit, dog or cat confined to a cage or small room, ensure that there is plenty of shady space for your pet to rest. Do not keep your pets chained or caged for long periods outdoors.
- Set up a circulating fan that will create a breeze without blowing directly on your pet. You can also drape a damp towel over part of the cage so the fan will blow through the towel and create cooler air. Be sure to pet-proof the fan cord!
- Place a ceramic or marble tile in your pet's favourite place, or home. The marble or tile stays cool for them to lie on.
- If you own a pet rabbit, you can also try misting your rabbit's ears. Rabbits dissipate heat through their ears and misting them will help keep the rabbit cool.

Give Them a Summer Crop!

- Brush out excessive fur. If you have a long haired rabbit, you may consider cropping your bunny's coat short frequently.

Keep Them Hydrated!

- Make sure clean water is available to your pet all the time.
- Give pets, such as rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs and chinchillas, fresh vegetables and fruits, but in moderation or it can get a tummy ache.

If you have more questions on pet care or health, send them in to adeline_chin@ava.gov.sg with the Subject Heading: Ask the Vet! (Issue 12), or via fax to 6223 5383.

Sterilise your pet



“

*I can't take it anymore.
He's had 6 paternity
suits* last year alone.*

”

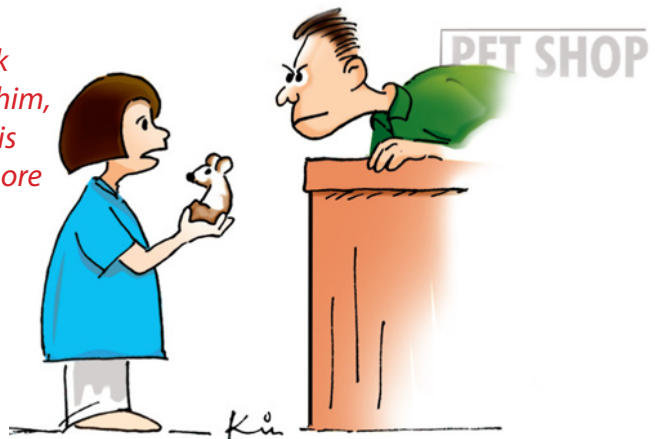
***paternity suit** (noun) : a lawsuit filed to determine the father of a child born out of wedlock (and to provide for the support of the child once paternity is determined)

Do not buy a pet on impulse

“

*Can you take him back
please? I have to feed him,
clean him and wash his
cage every day. He's more
trouble than my baby
brother.*

”





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