


EASE NEWS



ENVIRONMENTAL ANIMAL SANCTUARY AND EDUCATION
THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE **FRIENDS OF EASE**

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Editorial

***H**appy New Year to our EASE Friends, and welcome to another issue of EASE News. In the pages that follow we have an update on our Schools Project in Devon and our new EASE working guinea pig, Topaz. We also have an article entitled Coping with Guilt in Pet Bereavement with some useful views and guidance from our counsellor Angela Garner, as well as interesting animal-related news stories from around the world.*

Thank you for your continuing support which allows us to offer our EASE services for people who love pets.

MELINDA HILL
EASE PROJECT MANAGER

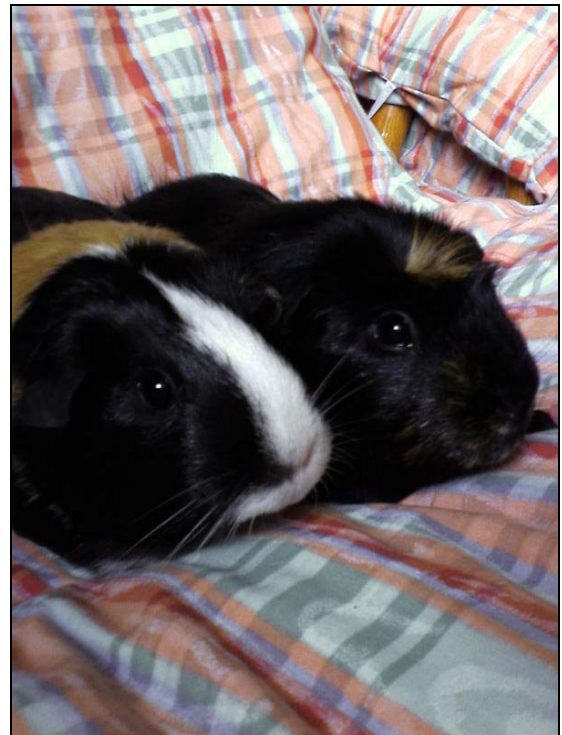
Devon School Project

Following the sad death of Jasper, the guinea pig who played an important role in the ‘Being Kind to Animals’ workshops in Devon, it was decided that a companion should be found for Beryl, the female.

Our idea was to find a rescue guinea pig, and, as it turned out, a neighbour had a male guinea pig who needed rehoming. He had been living alone since his two companions had bullied him, leaving him with a badly torn ear, and bites all down his back.

Angela took him on as the second EASE guinea pig, naming him ‘Topaz’. As he had been a much-loved family pet he was used to being handled, and it was felt that he would be a good candidate to continue the School Education Project with Beryl.

However, he needed a veterinarian check, neutering and surgery to his torn ear. Once this was done, he was carefully and gradually introduced to Beryl and they are now happily living together, as you can see in the picture below!



Future plans for the School Project

In the New Year Angela will again contact the local schools in East Devon, offering to visit with the guinea pigs to do workshops with the young children.

She has also been asked to do two workshops for a local project which helps people who are in temporary housing awaiting a more permanent home. This project, which is based in a community flat in the local area, offers valuable support to the distressed families, especially for the children who can attend after-school

homework sessions as well as play activities during the school holidays.

So in the February half-term break Angela will do two sessions with these children – one for the under 8s and one for the over 8s. The latter will be a new challenge for Angela but she welcomes this as it will be an excellent opportunity to work with older children and teenagers, offering them insights into the importance of treating animals with respect and kindness.

More about this will follow in our next EASE News!

*I will wear the gleaming sweat on my throat,
like a jewel,
and I will be an embarrassment to all,
especially my family...
who have not yet found the peace in being free
to have dogs as your best friends..*

*These friends who always wait, at any hour
for your footfall,
and eagerly jump to their feet out of a sound
sleep,
to greet you as if you are a god,
With warm eyes full of adoring love and hope
that you will always stay.*

‘One of the first conditions of happiness is that the link between Man and Nature shall not be broken.’

LEO TOLSTOY



Grow Old With Dogs

*When I am old...
I will wear soft grey sweatshirts,
and a bandana over my silver hair,
and I will spend my social security cheques on
wine and my dogs.*

*I will sit in my house on my well-worn chair
and listen to my dogs' breathing.
I will sneak out in the middle of a warm summer
night
and take my dogs for a run, if my old bones will
allow...*

*When people come to call, I will smile
and nod as I show them my dogs,
and talk of them and about them...
... the ones so beloved of the past
and the ones so beloved of today.*

*I will still work hard cleaning after them,
mopping and feeding them and
whispering their names in a soft loving way.*

*I'll hug their big strong necks,
I'll kiss their dear sweet heads,
and whisper in their very special company.*

*I look in the mirror... and see I am getting old.
This is the kind of person I am,
and have always been.
Loving dogs is easy, they are part of me.*

*Please accept me for who I am.
My dogs appreciate my presence in their lives,
they love my presence in their lives.
When I am old this will be important to me.
You will understand when you are old..
if you have dogs to love too.*

~ Author Unknown ~

Animal Champions

Nikki Alexander contacted EASE in the autumn of 2006 to ask for advice about setting up an education programme. In the course of the email exchange between Nikki and Mel, it became clear that Nikki carries out single-handedly some amazing animal welfare work in Spain, which we at EASE really want to support in whatever ways we can.

Nikki is a vet nurse and animal behaviourist who has spent her working life helping animals. Several years ago she left the UK to take up residence in Estepona, near Marbella in Spain, and quickly found herself playing an active role in rescuing local dogs in desperate need of her support and care.

She discovered that there are literally hundreds of puppies being abandoned in Spain on a weekly basis, and rehoming even the puppies – let alone the adult dogs – is a difficult task. Once stray or abandoned dogs are picked up by the authorities, they have ten days' grace in which they can be claimed or rehomed from the dog pound, but the holding facilities are poor with no quarantine, isolation or medical facilities to support the lost dogs. Nikki started taking home dogs from the pound so that she could nurse them back to health and find homes for them; but those that she was able to take were usually in very poor condition, with broken bones or infectious diseases, and infested with fleas and worms.

On one occasion Nikki found herself going to the local dog pound to collect and care for two dogs, the number for which she had adequate facilities at that time, and instead leaving the pound with 14 dogs – she just could not bear to leave them in such appalling conditions to face certain death. At one point she had 22 puppies in her care; sadly many of these died, but many more pulled through to regain their health and to find new homes at Nikki's hands.

Luckily she has the support of a wonderful local vet who often carries out neutering operations and dispenses medication for free. However, with no business experience or infrastructure to support her, Nikki's efforts are hampered by a lack of funding, volunteer support and sustainability. So at this point in time, having rescued and rehomed 32 dogs since May, she is trying to slow down the level of her hands-on rescue operation in order to put in place the

necessary structure and systems to enable her to make a more sustainable effort to rescue and rehome the abandoned dogs.

Nikki is also looking towards establishing an education programme, as she realises – as we do at EASE – that educating people, especially children, into thinking of animals as sentient beings deserving of our care will have long-term benefits in the struggle against cruelty and neglect towards animals.



Nikki with some of the dogs she has rescued

EASE is happy and proud to support Nikki's endeavours, by giving her £200 towards the costs of her work. Even though she is only one person engaging in a battle against impossible odds, as Mother Teresa said 'We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.'



Homeopathic treatment for cats

One of our EASE friends has passed on some good advice from her experience with caring for cats, which we wanted to share with everyone.

One of Carolyn's much-loved cats has experienced trouble with an obstinate skin allergy, which makes the cat scratch and tear at her fur, leaving bald and/or thinning patches. Conventional treatment for skin allergies consists of anti-histamines and, in severe cases, steroids but these drugs can have side-effects.

From her experience, Carolyn recommends in this situation visiting a homeopathic vet, who will offer gentle, extended treatment with moderate to good success if the owner stays with the treatment. These conditions are notoriously difficult to remedy by any method, so any relief is a bonus. Also, the homeopath honours any pet insurance the owner might have.

'Non-violence leads to the highest ethics which is the goal of all evolution. Until we stop harming all other living beings, we are still savages.'

Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931)

Caring for small animals through winter

It is vital to consider how to keep small pets safe and comfortable throughout the different seasons. In this issue we will look at caring for small animals, such as guinea pigs and rabbits, that are kept outside throughout the cold weather.

Tips on winter care

There are several things to consider during the cold weather, but in particular that outdoor caged pets need daily attention morning and evening. Whilst it is good for children to learn to take responsibility for the daily care of their pets, parents or carers do need to ensure that this is done properly. *Remember, small pets can suffer in cold weather or even freeze to death.*



Location of outdoor hutch

- 🐾 You may be able to move the hutch to a place that is well sheltered from the wind and rain. Ideally it would be near to the house, so that you can easily keep an eye on the occupants and attend to them without getting wet and cold yourself!
- 🐾 The wired part of the hutch needs to be covered with a weatherproof drape each night, and removed each morning to allow them to see out.

- 🐾 *Never move the living quarters into a garage or outbuilding that houses vehicles as the fumes could kill small animals.*

Bedding

- 🐾 Even through the winter months it is important to keep hutches and cages scrupulously clean, with plenty of warm, dry bedding. It is best to use dust-extracted hay and bagged bedding to reduce problems from dust and parasites.
- 🐾 A fresh layer of bedding should be put in the hutch each day, together with a really generous amount of hay for them to chew and to burrow into.

Daily care

It is vital to attend to small pets each and every day to:

- 🐾 Check for signs of ill health.
- 🐾 Give fresh food and a new supply of their dried food, and a generous supply of hay, plus fresh water.
- 🐾 Remove and replace any soiled bedding.
- 🐾 Offer companionship, especially to animals who live alone.



Indoor cage

If you want to bring your animals indoors during the cold weather, here are a few things to consider:

- 🐾 Ensure that the small animals remain safe from other pets or the unwanted attention of small children.
- 🐾 Rabbits and guinea pigs have sensitive hearing so they need to be kept somewhere quiet.
- 🐾 As with outdoor hutches, they will need a private place in their cage, somewhere to hide in, such as a pet-safe play-tube or wooden tunnel.
- 🐾 Your pets will still need daily exercise, which can be supervised 'floor time', but you must protect them from other pets and small children, and ensure that there are no gaps to get into such as behind a fridge or cooker, and no exposed wires to chew – as they are likely to do both!









Coping with Guilt in Pet Bereavement

This issue continues with an article on Pet Bereavement by Angela Garner who runs our national support service. Angela reports that guilt is a common difficulty faced by people in pet bereavement, and she offers insights into this subject. An information sheet from this article is now available for download from the EASE website to supplement our existing pet bereavement support literature.




What is guilt like? Guilt often arrives on its own account to burden us when we are in a vulnerable state coping with a recent loss. It brings the uncomfortable feeling that things aren't quite right and makes us question everything, sometimes over and over in our minds, bringing up 'what if', 'should have' or 'shouldn't have' and suchlike.

Why do we feel this way? Bereavement, indeed loss of any sort, causes shock, distress, anguish, disbelief, and anger – a whole emotional roller-coaster. Our normal routine is shattered, and we face the difficult task of having to rebuild life in a new way, adapting to the changed circumstances, which of course is very challenging. It feels as if the rug has been pulled from under our feet leaving us in a vulnerable, shaky state which makes us doubt and question everything involved in the circumstances leading up to the loss. It's as though this uncertainty and vulnerability leaves the door open to the unwelcome visitor called 'guilt', which arrives with a ton of unwanted baggage that weighs us down with all sort of negative thoughts.




What does it cause?

-  Feeling more guilty if we stop thinking about the pet we have loved and lost, or if we find ourselves smiling or laughing.
-  Having recurring worries about having fallen short in some respect.
-  Being unable to settle to the loss.
-  Feeling a weight or cloud over us that never seems to lift.
-  Being unable to move on.
-  Feeling that we don't deserve to be happy ever again.

What can you do about it? Like all unpleasant things, a person needs to bring into the open what they're thinking and feeling so that they can see what is really going on. Once they see and recognise guilt for what it is, they can begin to deal with it. There are different ways of coping with guilt; here are some ideas:

-  Understand that guilt serves no useful purpose whatsoever, and therefore ask, 'Do I want to spend the rest of my life carrying around this useless feeling?'
-  Work it through and out of the system by talking to someone you trust – a friend, a member of the family or a counsellor. This way you externalise it. Whilst it remains bottled up inside it will sooner or later develop into something much bigger than it actually is.
-  Accept that even when you've done your best in difficult circumstances, there are times when it will never feel enough.

An important aspect of coping with guilt is to reason through what actually went on and to establish a balanced view of the circumstances – it is so easy to fall prey to negativity when in fact there may be a number of positive things which are not getting a look-in! To do this you have to step away from the emotional turmoil surrounding guilt and get an objective view. Here are a few tips to help in this:

-  Look back over the time you shared with your pet and add up the many small things you did that showed how much you cared.
-  Realise that even if you weren't able to fulfil all that you might have wished for your pet, at least you did your best.
-  Consider what you can learn from this recent experience to take forward as new wisdom (and maybe even share this with others in similar circumstances in the future).

Finally: Realise that guilt serves no positive purpose, and it is important to work through this so that in time you will be able to move on through the grief process towards healing and settlement.

World Watch

In a zoo in California, a mother tiger gave birth to a rare set of triplet tiger cubs. Unfortunately, due to complications in the pregnancy, the cubs were born prematurely and, due to their tiny size, they died shortly after birth.

After recovering from the delivery, the mother tiger suddenly started to decline in health although physically she was fine. The veterinarians felt that the loss of her litter had caused the tigress to fall into a depression. The doctors decided that if the tigress could surrogate another mother's cubs perhaps she would improve.

After checking with many other zoos across the country, the depressing news was that there were no tiger cubs of the right age to introduce to the mourning mother. The veterinarians decided to try something that had never been tried in a zoo environment. Sometimes a mother of one species will take on the care of a different species. The only orphans that could be found quickly were a litter of piglets. The zoo keepers and vets wrapped the piglets in tiger skin and placed the babies around the mother tiger, with the most amazing effects! The mother accepted the piglets completely, and a wonderful partnership ensued that beautifully demonstrates the power of maternal love in the animal kingdom.



'What greater gift than the love of a cat?'

CHARLES DICKENS

'Animals Matter to Me' Campaign

In the summer of 2006 hundreds of the world's animal welfare groups began the massive task of building a petition of ten million signatures. The 'Animals Matter to Me' petition is calling for a UN Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare.

The initiative is being coordinated by the World Society for the protection of Animals (WSPA) and its member societies (local and national animal welfare organisations based in some 142 countries). Five UN member states (Costa Rica, Kenya, India, the Czech Republic and the Philippines, representing four out of the five regions that make up the UN General Assembly) have already formed a steering group committed to taking the initiative forward to the United Nations.

A number of leading animal welfare organisations are members of a core working group to help progress this initiative; they include the RSPCA, Humane Society International (HIS) and Compassion in World Farming (CWF). The issues concerning the campaign encompass the suffering present in industrial animal farming, in stray cats and dogs and in working equines, and the illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife parts.

In principle, the Universal Declaration will call on the United Nations to recognise animals as sentient beings, capable of experiencing pain and suffering, and to recognise that animal welfare is an issue of importance as part of the social development of nations worldwide.

To find out more about the campaign and to add your name to the petition, visit:

www.animalsmatter.org



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