


EASE NEWS



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

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Editorial

Greetings to our Friends and welcome to another issue of EASE News. In the pages that follow we have reports from our Schools Project in Devon and from our Pet Bereavement Support Service. We also have articles on bringing home a rescue cat, the effect of pet loss, and summer care for hutch-dwelling animals – so hopefully something for everyone!

Thank you for your support which allows us to continue offering our EASE services.

MELINDA HILL
EASE PROJECT MANAGER

Devon School Project

In April Angela Garner, who runs the EASE Devon preschool project, visited Stockland and Yarcombe Preschool in Devon, where she introduced the children to the concept of being kind to animals. We are glad to be able to show a couple of photographs from this session, together with a letter from one of the teachers:



Angela and Beryl in action

Dear Angela,

As for your visit, I think I can speak for everyone there when I say we all found your visit extremely interesting and informative, and fun as well. You gave us all a very good insight into how to look after our animals, from feeding to play and housing etc. Having the children all sat round, very well behaved for 3- and 4-year-olds and completely fascinated by you, Topaz and Beryl, has got to prove just how much your visit was appreciated by us all. I know for one that Izzy did not stop talking about it for days. So please accept my sincere thanks and gratitude for a wonderful morning spent with you and your furry friends. We will most definitely be calling on you again in the future, I am sure, for more visits.

Sarah Steele
Stockland Preschool

PS: I shall never forget when you asked the children 'what food do guinea pigs eat?'... and out of the mouths of babes, Charlie says 'guinea pig food'!



Angela also reports the following on her 'Being Kind to Animals' workshops at community flats in Devon:

During the school half-term holiday in February, I went along to the Community Flat Project which supports local families and offers an after-school club and various activities during the school holidays for children. The children were having an 'animal week' so there were pet-related activities going on each day. I had offered to do two workshops, one for the 'under 8 years' and one for the 'over 8 years', the latter of which would be a new experience for me.

The first session was attended by seven children, two parents, a local community police officer, the lady who runs the scheme and one of her colleagues who came along to help. They proved to be a lively group of children (and adults!), all joining in enthusiastically.

The workshop was based on encouraging empathy between the children and animals, to help them realise that pets need many of the same things as people. As usual, I took along the two EASE guinea pigs, Beryl and Topaz. This was Topaz's first workshop so I was particularly careful to prevent him becoming stressed. Everyone seemed to really enjoy the workshop.

The second session was attended by five girls, of ages ranging from 8 to 14 years old. This part had a very different nature as we talked about deeper issues. We started off by looking at a question "Do you think you have to be tougher to be kind rather than horrible to others, including animals?" This brought up the aspect of peer pressure and how difficult it is to be different from the rest of a group, and to not join in with things that don't feel right.

One of the girls told us how she and a friend rescued a frail, elderly cat from a group of younger children who were teasing and throwing stones at the poor creature. The cat was subsequently taken to the Cats Protection League where it was well cared for, so the girls had clearly done a wonderful job – they had made a real difference to that cat's life.

Some of the girls said they felt ashamed at the bad treatment of animals in the world, so we looked at how to make a difference, and at the fact that each of us has a choice in what we do and in the reason why we do it. This was an interesting session, and one in which the participants felt safe and settled enough to talk about how they really felt about these things, expressing their concerns and asking lots of questions.

How to photograph a puppy

1. Remove film from box and load camera.
2. Remove film box from puppy's mouth and throw in trash.
3. Remove puppy from trash and brush coffee grounds from muzzle.
4. Choose a suitable background for photo.
5. Mount camera on tripod and focus.
6. Find puppy and take dirty sock from mouth.
7. Place puppy in pre-focused spot and return to camera.
8. Forget about spot and crawl after puppy on knees.
9. Focus with one hand and fend off puppy with other hand.
10. Get tissue and clean nose print from lens.
11. Put cat outside and put peroxide on the scratch on puppy's nose.
12. Put magazines back on coffee table.
13. Try to get puppy's attention by squeaking toy over your head.
14. Replace your glasses and check camera for damage.
15. Jump up in time to grab puppy by scruff of neck and say "No, outside! No, outside!"
16. Clean up mess.
17. Sit back in chair with lemonade and resolve to teach puppy "sit" and "stay" first thing in the morning.



Bringing Home your New Cat

By Deirdre Chitwood

Certified Tellington TTouch Practitioner for Companion Animals

Adopting a cat from an animal sanctuary is, without doubt, a really good thing to do. However, many adopted cats are abandoned after a few weeks and returned to the sanctuary when people find they can't deal with their new feline friend. The result of this on a cat that once again experiences a breach of trust, and the loss of a caregiver may result in trauma and a deep-seated distrust of humans. Much of this can be avoided if a few simple guidelines are followed.

Remember that cats do not naturally live inside buildings or with humans; they do not know who you are and that your intentions are to love and care for them. You are about to take them from the environment they have come to know as home and move them to a totally new place where everything will be strange. Every smell, sound and piece of furniture will be different, even their food may well be different. Imagine yourself in the cat's place and think how you would feel in a totally new environment, surrounded by strangers that are perhaps 30 to 40 times your size.



Firstly, it is best to always use a cat carrier to transport your cat as it is dangerous to have him roaming freely in the car and can cause an accident. Cats rarely like to travel and are often frightened, so speak softly to your cat and try to keep the environment in the car as quiet and peaceful as you can. If possible have someone else do the driving so you can focus on the cat. Take a few minutes before

you begin any journey to speak quietly to your cat to reassure him.

When you get your adopted cat home he will probably be highly stressed and will no doubt feel uncomfortable at first. Cats have a strong sense of territory and the most important thing you can do is to allow him to adjust to his new home in his own time.

Some Helpful Tips

The smaller the territory your cat has to become familiar with initially, the quicker he will adjust.

Select a small, quiet, comfortable room, preferably with a carpet and some warm, snuggly places for him to sleep with cushions and blankets. Make sure the room is well ventilated but warm and keep the doors and windows closed. A room with subdued lighting is best, so partially close the curtains or blinds if possible. Playing classical music softly in the background, may also help the new arrival to relax.

Set the carrier down in a corner, open it up and sit down quietly on the opposite side of the room or leave the room completely. Don't push the cat out; allow him to come out in his own time. Don't try to smother him with attention; he will come to you when he is ready.

In the meantime, you can use eye signals to communicate with your cat – blinking and looking away which is a 'calming signal' that cats use with each other. You can use a slow half blink or a full blink. With some cats, glancing away after the blink works well. The most important part of this is to be thinking love and good feelings towards your cat as you do this. This will allow him to release some of his fear and start to build a bond of trust between you.

It may take him some time to come out of his carrier, and when he does he will probably run and hide under a bed or chair. Do not try to catch him or encourage him to come out. Leave him alone and he will come out in his own time. The more you try to rush the adjustment time, the longer it will take. It is best to go about your business elsewhere in the house.

Set up his room with food and water. Place a litter box near his hiding place but away from his food and water. Put the litter in the box outside the room so you do not frighten him unduly with the noise. Set up a scratching post and place a few toys around the room.

Remember that your cat will need time to adjust to the new smells and sounds, and will be

watching everything that is going on including every move you make. His first impressions of you and his new environment are very important in how quickly he will settle in and begin to trust you. He will need time to get to know you. Don't rush him or force him. remember that to go slow is to go fast. Do not invite friends and family over to meet the cat, he will need a few weeks of peace and quiet to get acquainted with you and his new environment. Don't take it personally if he is not sitting in your lap as soon as you had hoped; he will come to you for affection when he is ready. By doing the 'calming signals' often you will be 'speaking his language' and will win his trust and affection more quickly.

You can also try to speed up the 'getting to know you' process by offering him treats, which can be some special food such as pieces of fresh shrimp. Do not try to give them to him but leave them lying out in the middle of the room. Don't try to approach him with them as this may appear threatening to your cat. The treats are meant to speed up the cat approaching you, not the other way round.

When the cat has adjusted to the territory of the small room, which may take several days or even a week, you can begin to leave the door open so he can start to explore the rest of the house. Again, let him do this in his own time. Often a cat will venture out at night when you are asleep and it is quiet. Allow him to come and go as he pleases and leave the door open so he can run back to the safety of his 'known space' if something scares him. Soon he will have explored and adjusted to your whole house.

Now you can move the food bowls and litter box to a more convenient place. Have two or three litter boxes and wait until he knows where they are before you take one away. That way you will not have any 'accidents'.

When your cat is beginning to approach you, wait quietly until he comes to you. Perhaps you can use a toy to encourage communication between you. When you begin to touch him, do so with the back of your hand which is a TTouch known as the Llama Touch. This is less invasive as the cat does not feel threatened that you are going to try to grab or pick him up. Treat him gently and with respect at all times and he will learn to love and trust you. Speak quietly to him at all times.

If your cat continues to be stressed and fearful it could be for several reasons. Firstly, he may have experienced being abused by humans and it may take you longer to win his trust. TTouch can greatly help a cat reduce their fear and regain self-

confidence and can help you to build a loving bond in a much shorter time. If you have adopted a kitten, it may be that he is missing his mother or siblings; this is also where TTouch can be useful. TTouch will help a kitten to calm down and feel welcome.



If you are adopting a further cat

It is best if possible to select a cat that is different in age and sex to the resident cat(s) or at least to the last one to come into the family.

It is important to give your resident feline family more love and affection than the new arrival at the beginning. They are the ones that will feel their space is being invaded, and they will need the extra attention to prevent them feeling jealous and insecure.

When the new arrival seems to be adjusting to you and the room, you can begin to introduce them by getting them used to the smell of each other. You can do this by rotating their bedding. After a few days you can begin by letting them smell each other under the door. Once they have had plenty of opportunity to adjust to each other's scent you can begin to leave the door open.

The new cat will eventually creep out to meet the resident cat(s). What may happen is that they arch their backs and hiss at each other and then flee to safety. Do not panic. Most initial encounters can appear to be hostile but are not. Leave the door open so the newcomer can retreat to his own room and it is best not to interfere; they nearly always work it out by themselves.

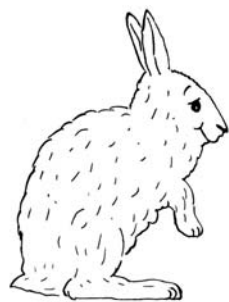
We hope that you find these tips useful and we wish you every joy with your feline friend...

Summer care for hutch-dwelling small animals

Last summer we received a pet bereavement phone call from a lady whose elderly guinea pig had died as a result of fly strike, and she asked us to warn other owners about this awful condition. So following on from the last edition of EASE News, in which we included an article on caring for small animals through winter, here are some tips on the summer care of small animals.

Fly strike

It is vital to check hutch-dwelling animals at least twice a day for signs of fly strike. While elderly animals are particularly susceptible to the terrible effects of this condition, young and healthy pets can also be at risk.



Fly strike, or blowfly strike, occurs during the summer months and is a serious condition which can affect small animals such as rabbits and guinea pigs. Fly strike is caused by flies attracted to damp fur, urine, faeces or the odour of scent glands. Flies lay their eggs on or around

the pet's rear end where they hatch within hours into a seething bunch of maggots that eat into flesh, releasing toxins in the process. If you find maggots on your rabbit then take it to the vet straight away.

As animals can get ill from fly strike very quickly, it is absolutely vital to get them to a vet for immediate treatment. Vets do recognise how quickly and easily fly strike can happen, so don't worry that your vet will think your pet has been neglected in any way. Eggs can turn into maggots in just a few hours in warm weather. If a pet feels unusually wet do not assume it has just brushed against water bottle, as wetness around the rear can be a warning sign of fly strike and must be investigated thoroughly.

Prevention is better than cure

So what else can be done to keep small pets healthy and happy outside during the warm weather?

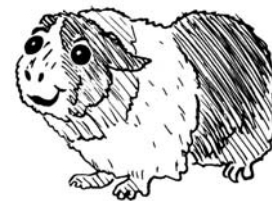
Diet: Ensuring that pets receive the right amount of appropriate fresh food alongside their dried feed will help to prevent soft or runny droppings which can attract flies.

It is wise to rinse any fresh food before giving it to pets, and also not to collect fresh greens from areas where there are wild rabbits or rodents, to reduce the risk of passing on parasites such as worms.

Regular vet checks: Having small animals regularly checked by a vet makes good sense for a variety of reasons:

- 🐾 Recommendation of products to help prevent fly strike in hot weather
- 🐾 Preventative treatment against parasites such as worms and lice
- 🐾 Regular checking of teeth since overgrown teeth can prevent proper grooming and cause difficulties with eating
- 🐾 Many diseases and medical conditions can be detected and treated early

Placement of hutches: It's worth remembering that fruit trees and bushes in the garden will attract a lot of flies, especially as the fruit ripens and fallen fruit rot on the ground. It may be possible to attach some very fine netting over hutches to prevent the flies from reaching the small animals. It's also important to ensure that the hutch is not placed in full sun, as the inhabitants will get too hot. Pets always need to be able to easily access cool, shady areas, whether this is inside a hutch or grazing frame.



Good husbandry: This is essential in keeping small pets happy and healthy. This includes regular and thorough cleaning of hutches, water bottles and feeding bowls as well as the placement of fresh bedding and hay, using a hay-rack if available.

Lastly, while it is good to encourage children to look after their pets, it is vital that the responsible adults ensure this is carried out to a good standard.



What companion animals mean to us, and the effect of pet loss

by Angela Garner (DipFEA, DipPBC)

Angela Garner is a qualified and experienced pet bereavement counsellor who runs the EASE national pet bereavement helpline and a consultancy called remedies4pets (flower essence therapy for animals) from her home in Devon. However, Angela has written this article from her own recent personal experience of loving and losing a beloved pet, in the hope that it will offer insights into the human-animal relationship and how we are affected by pet loss.

What pets mean to us

Being passionate about animals since as far back as I can remember, and having taken in many waifs and strays over the years, I have of course loved and subsequently lost a good number of pets – some through old age, others through illnesses or accidents. Besides gaining a diploma in pet bereavement counselling and researching the effects of grief, I use my personal experience to support others by running the EASE national helpline. I do this because I recognise the difficulties people face during pet loss and how important it is to have an understanding and empathetic person with whom to talk things through.

The grief from losing a beloved pet is integral to the human-companion animal relationship, and shouldn't be viewed as a standalone difficulty that people just have 'to go through' every now and then. However, before entering into the dynamic of pet bereavement, it is important to look at the significance of the relationship people have with their pets. There has been much research and numerous articles written on the positive effects of caring for a pet which detail the psychological, emotional and physiological benefits. These include such things as how stroking a pet can lower the blood pressure, and how pet-owning patients may recover more quickly from operations. However, to get to the core of what companion animals mean to us, we need to look at what we feel about our pets.

If I consider what my beloved dog meant to me during his life, then I could spend ages writing about this. In fact, I ended up writing a book, entitled 'Bobby's Tale – a canine biography'* because he meant so much to my husband and I that I wanted to record the richness, fun and adventures we had shared. Bobby was a small crossbreed terrier dog whom we adopted from a RSPCA centre

some ten years ago. There was no history to go on as he'd been picked up as a stray with a severely injured back leg which the vet had to remove to save his life. I have to admit that the early days with Bobby were challenging as he reacted badly towards various things, one of which was being left alone. However, my husband and I were committed to this little dog and subsequently set our feet firmly upon the path of finding out as much as we could about the canine mind, and how to help him. Subsequently we formed a very close bond with Bobby, as he became central to our lives, being considered in all family matters.

The reason for detailing this is to help to form a picture of how strongly a beloved pet can feature in family life. As in many cases, Bobby wasn't just a dog; he was a member of the family, whose welfare and happiness were given high priority in our day-to-day lives. This is not an unusual situation as many of the pet-owning population seem to feel the same way to greater or lesser degrees. Pets mean a great deal to us, offering valuable companionship and, of course, not forgetting the great service that working animals give to their owners. One of the most common but wonderful gifts pets offer is to simply be there for us – enthusiastically greeting us when we return home and often helping us through difficult and trying times. For others they relieve loneliness, perhaps their presence being the only reason and purpose to get up in the morning. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that companion animals mean the world to us; they bring years of comfort, joy and fun, each in their own unique and special way.

The effect of pet loss

When someone comes to me for pet bereavement support, I witness the extent of feelings they held for their pet, and I totally understand the devastation they experience. When Bobby died unexpectedly one Saturday afternoon, my husband and I were left in a state of severe shock. He had been his normal happy self that morning and little did we know that his morning walk would be the last. When we realised that Bobby had gone we found ourselves suddenly plunged into a depth of grief we had never experienced before. The pain was almost physical as it welled up inside and was only temporarily relieved by our tears. It came in overwhelming waves leaving us floundering on the beach of our loss. Fortunately, we had each other, besides friends and family who understood what Bobby meant to us and therefore recognised our grief. But there are many who don't have understanding partners or

friends and family, and for them the struggle is even greater.

Creating space to grieve

We found we had to get out of the house which felt so empty without our little friend, but we were anxious not to see anyone we knew who might ask after Bobby, as we were rarely seen out and about without him. Firstly we worked out a strategy to let family, friends, neighbours, acquaintances and colleagues know what had happened. We enlisted the help of a few kind neighbours and friends to do this, also writing and emailing where necessary. This allowed us to create the space we needed to release our grief in private, which I see to be very important. I also managed to arrange a few days annual leave from my job so that I didn't have to go to work and pretend to be normal when in fact it felt as though my world had just collapsed.

Journeying along the path of grief

Having created the space, we allowed ourselves the total freedom to feel what we felt – whether this was crying, talking things through, or just being quiet. Whilst the sadness was overwhelming at times, we did try to lift ourselves up when we could. We did this by being a little firm with ourselves, but never hard. Neither of us wanted to eat but each day we had regular meals, forcing down a little food to keep our strength up. As is often the case in grief, night-times were difficult too, so we did what we could to secure a decent night's sleep, using homeopathy. We also used flower remedies for emotional and psychological support. My recently-acquired diploma in Flower Essence Therapy was put to good use as I was able to select a combination of remedies to help us through the shock and grief.**

On reflection, one thing that helped us was to really go through the grief process one hundred percent with no-holes barred. We knew why we felt like we did and so we accepted it and went with the flow. As humans we have the ability to have and express our emotions and it is vital to do so especially during grief.

Another important factor was being able to talk things through with each other or with family and friends. During pet grief there are many 'if only's and 'should have's and 'shouldn't have's that arise. It's easy to feel guilty or to go over the events of the death of a pet, doubting and agonising over decisions made and what was and wasn't done. If we don't get these things out in the open and talk them through, they become internalised and start to gnaw away tormenting our minds for months or

even years to come. So talking and sharing is vital in pet loss, as in any grief process, but it's important to find someone who actually understands what we feel, or at least recognises the depth of anguish we are suffering.

Letting go

In the quiet moments we reflected that we had had nearly ten years of wonderful companionship with Bobby, and now we needed to let him go. It's easy to talk about 'letting go' but not so easy to do, yet we both found our own ways of doing so. No-one can say exactly what happens when our loved ones die, but it does feel right to let them go, fortifying them with the love and care we held for them during their lives. Life moves on in many ways, and we knew that in time we too would move on, never forgetting our beloved canine companion - always remembering the special bond we had with him, with thankfulness for the gifts of joy and fun he brought us.



Settlement

In time we managed to journey towards some settlement about the fact that Bobby had moved on. We found great comfort in a comment a friend made in her sympathy card to us, which was that 'Bobby quit while he was ahead'. Yes, he had had a full and happy life with us and when he died, he went quickly, for which we are grateful. A little while ago we decided to offer another canine companion a home and soon enough a young crossbreed found his way to us. We call him Rufus, and we look forward to many years of companionship and joy with him.

*To discuss any aspect of this article, contact Angela on:
07870 740605 or email: pbss@btinternet.com*

**To purchase 'Bobby's Tale' visit www.think2create.com*

*** For details on the use of flower remedies visit
www.remedies4pets.co.uk*

‘DOGS ARE OUR LINK TO PARADISE. THEY DON’T KNOW EVIL OR JEALOUSY OR DISCONTENT. TO SIT WITH A DOG ON A HILLSIDE ON A GLORIOUS AFTERNOON IS TO BE BACK IN EDEN, WHERE DOING NOTHING WAS NOT BORING – IT WAS PEACE’.

MILAN KUNDERA

World Watch

Swan feeds fish at zoo

A swan in a Chinese zoo feeds its fish friends every day to the amazement of visitors.



The swan picks up the feed and takes it to the mouths of the waiting fish, reports Southern City Papers. “They became close friends after three years of playing together,” say staff at Safari Park in Shenzhen City.

“Every time I come to feed the swan, all the fish follow him to the bank with mouths open. And he takes the food and puts some into each of the hungry mouths,” says the feeder. “When everyone has eaten enough, the swan goes back onto the water and plays with his fish friends again.”

Pet Bereavement Support Service

The EASE Pet Bereavement Support Service continues strongly, with our website (www.ease-animals.org.uk) consistently high in the search engines, which results in the website getting a fair amount of traffic. One recent example of this was from Jan Sangster of the Eastcott veterinary practice based in Swindon, who told EASE:

“As a veterinary practice we are very aware of the distress that a bereaved owner feels when the time comes to have their pet put to sleep, and we wanted to provide some support in the form of helpful and empathetic literature which the owner could take away and read. Having searched the internet I came across EASE and copies of their leaflets. These struck just the right tone and were well written. As a result we felt that by providing this literature at such a difficult time for bereaved owners, we are able to help when they need compassion and support. We have also provided a link from our website to the EASE website to enable bereaved owners to access EASE’s excellent services.”



IN ORDER TO KEEP A TRUE PERSPECTIVE OF ONE'S IMPORTANCE, EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE A DOG THAT WILL WORSHIP HIM AND A CAT THAT WILL IGNORE HIM.

DEREK BRUCE



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