

# Responsible Pet Ownership Ambassador Newsletter

May 2008  
Issue 2



## News

### Children's Pocket Calendar Design Competition 2008

now on!

Our Pocket Calendar Design Competition 2008 is now on and we would like to invite your school to participate! Participation is free and open to all children in primary one to six (or equivalent). The school with the most entries will also receive a prize in appreciation of their support.

A selection of the winning designs will be reproduced on 2009 pocket calendars. These will be distributed towards the end of 2008 to schools and the public. Encourage your students to participate in the competition and help us spread the message of Responsible Pet Ownership (RPO).

Theme: **"Be A Responsible Pet Owner"**

Categories:

Category A Primary 1 and 2 students	Category B Primary 3 and 4 students	Category C Primary 5 and 6 students
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Prizes:

Categories	A	B	C
Winning Entry	\$200	\$200	\$200
Merit (x5)	\$50	\$50	\$50
School with most entries	\$600		

**Closing Date:** 12 September 2008.

**Results:** Winners will be notified in October 2008.

Prizes will be presented at the launch of our RPO Roadshow on 7 November 2008.

**Enquiries:** Please contact Mr Ahmad Hafiz at tel: 63257594 or email: ahmad\_hafiz\_jumadi@ava.gov.sg

**Download more information and the application forms now at [www.ava.gov.sg](http://www.ava.gov.sg)!**



Last year's winning entries can be viewed at [www.ava.gov.sg](http://www.ava.gov.sg)



The cover of AVAVision, AVA's Corporate Newsletter, featuring one of last year's winners, Chua Shiao Shynn from Nanyang Primary School, receiving her prize from Parliamentary Secretary for National Development, Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman.



# Responsible Pet Ownership Roadshow

## happening on 7 – 9 November 2008!

**Come join us!**



Since 2004, AVA has been holding a RPO Roadshow as part of its RPO Education Programme and this year's, to be held at the **Singapore Expo**, will be the biggest one yet!

Look out for your invite to the Launch of the Roadshow to be held on **Friday, 7 November 2008**. We really look forward to seeing you there!

### Reasons to be there:



Exciting stage games



Interesting and educational talks



Obedience training demos



Interactive displays



'Ask the Vet' Corner



Cute souvenirs and goodie bags



Display of art competition entries



Animal welfare groups' booths



Fun activities for children

#### Something exciting and new at AVA RPO Roadshow 2008...

You can now book fun filled educational activity slots at the Roadshow!

This year, we are holding RPO Roadshow Activity Sessions to help you and your students get the most out of the RPO Roadshow. During each one and a half hour session, seats will be reserved for students and teachers to enjoy scheduled stage activities such as talks, games, pet demonstrations, and more! Each participant will also receive a goodie bag of RPO collaterals. A guide will take the group to the different exhibits, giving detailed explanations of each and be on hand to answer questions. Students will also have the opportunity to interact with and support the participating animal welfare groups.

After the session, students should come away with a better understanding of animal welfare and responsible pet ownership and the part they and society can play to pave the way to a gracious and humane society.

A full programme list will be released soon. Look out for it in your inbox and on our website at [www.ava.gov.sg](http://www.ava.gov.sg).

In the meantime, to pre-book the sessions, contact **Ms Sherry Nee**, at 63257420, or email: [sherry\\_nee@ava.gov.sg](mailto:sherry_nee@ava.gov.sg)



# 10 facts you have to know about Rabbits

by Ms Betty Tan, President of House Rabbit Society Singapore (HRSS).



- 1** Rabbits are not low maintenance starter pets; they require as much love, attention and effort as any other pet. When they're ill, they need to be checked by vets who are professionally trained in rabbit care.
- 2** Contrary to common belief, a well cared for rabbit can live from 8-10 years.
- 3** Rabbits don't just eat carrots. A healthy rabbit diet should consist of unlimited fresh timothy hay, green leafy vegetables, quality commercial pellets and fresh water. Occasional treats can also be given sparingly.
- 4** A rabbit should NEVER be picked up by its ears. The correct way to carry a rabbit is to slide one hand under the rabbit's front paws in the direction of its hind end and place your other hand on the rabbit's rump. Lift the rabbit up, supporting the entire body with both hands. Hold it close to you. A secure rabbit is less likely to bite, scratch or kick. Be very gentle and careful. A rabbit's skeleton is fragile and if it struggles, it may get injured.
- 5** In general, rabbits do not need to be bathed. In fact, bathing is a source of stress for many rabbits. Most rabbits are fastidious groomers and will groom their coats to a nice, clean finish. Consequently, rabbits can end up swallowing a lot of fur and developing hairballs. To help reduce the amount of fur your rabbit ingests, brush it at least once a week in the direction of the fur growth. If your rabbit is shedding heavily, brush it everyday. It may be easier during these periods to gently pull out loose hair with your fingers and follow up with a brushing. Use a bristle brush or pin brush as a rabbit's skin is very delicate.
- 6** Rabbits can be easily litter-trained. Rabbits are intelligent animals that can be taught to go to a specific place to pee and poo. Pick a spot where the rabbit likes to go to and place the litter box there. Encourage it to go inside the box for its business by putting in lots of hay for it to munch on while doing its "work".
- 7** Rabbits are social animals and would appreciate a companion of its own kind.
- 8** Rabbits that are sterilised make better pets. Spaying or neutering your rabbit is the best thing you can do for it. Female rabbits will live longer because you eliminate the possibility of ovarian, uterine or mammary tumors. Your rabbit will be less aggressive and have more reliable litterbox habits. Most importantly, sterilisation prevents any unwanted litters.
- 9** Contrary to popular belief, rabbits and young children generally do not do well together. As rabbits are delicate animals, they need someone who is responsible and ready to commit to their care for a minimum period of 6 or more years.
- 10** Lastly, A RABBIT IS FOR LIFE, Rabbits should NEVER be obtained on impulse or as gifts for your children or friends. You should also never choose to abandon your rabbits in any case. Animal abandonment is a crime and punishable by law in Singapore.



# Rabbit Abandonment in Singapore

by Ms Betty Tan, President of House Rabbit Society Singapore (HRSS).

Last year, more than 800 rabbits were surrendered to the SPCA and HRSS. This does not take into consideration the numbers that we found abandoned in places like reservoirs, parks, void decks, car parks etc. When we found these abandoned rabbits, they were usually in a dire state. Most rabbits we found suffered from ailments like fur mites and malnourishment but there were some that were in more terrible conditions.

## Valentine :

Valentine was found abandoned in a carton box and left inside the lift of a HDB block at Circuit Road. When found, he was suffering from a swollen foot with an open wound. As the condition of the wound was too bad, amputation was the only way to stop any infection from attacking his already fragile and weak body. He has since recovered from the operation and is currently receiving the love and care he deserves.

## Bubbles:

Bubbles was found abandoned in a Chinese Temple in the Clementi area, suffering from a serious case of scabies. His eyes also showed how much despair he was in and it definitely broke our hearts to see such a young rabbit suffering so much. The scabies took three weeks to heal completely and he's now doing well at his foster parent's place, awaiting a responsible owner to give him a "forever" home.

Everyone has a part to play in preventing animal abandonment. If you see such an act being carried out, report the case to the AVA at 1800 476 1600 or SPCA at 6287 5355.

Read more about Valentine and Bubbles at the HRSS website at [www.hrss.net](http://www.hrss.net)

If you are ready to give a rabbit a permanent home, visit the HRSS Adoption Gallery at [http://www.hrss.net/adopt/adpt\\_rabbits.html](http://www.hrss.net/adopt/adpt_rabbits.html)



Valentine



Valentine's injured leg



Bubbles



Bubbles suffering from scabies

# Launch of RPO Pet Pal Badge Programme 2008 at Elias Park Primary School

Contributed by Mr Kandesan s/o Ramasamy, Head of Department, Mother Tongue/ Civics and Moral Education, Elias Park Primary School

### Introduction

The Civics and Moral Education (CME) department has a 'Pet Care Programme' in which pupils learn important values of kindness, respect and care and are encouraged to become active ambassadors to their friends and family members on Pet Care. In 2007, a guest speaker from AVA was invited to present a talk on pet ownership to all Primary 2 (P2) pupils. This year, in collaboration with AVA, the CME dept has embarked on the Responsible Pet Ownership (RPO) Pal Badge Programme targeted at P2 pupils.

### Background

Last year, the Head of Department for Mother Tongue Languages (MTL) & CME came across an article in 'The Electric New Paper' titled "From Stray To MP's Pet", in which a stray dog, Xiao Hei, was adopted by Member of Parliament Ms Lee Bee Wah. He decided to write to Ms Lee to invite her to share her inspiring story to the pupils during assembly and reinforce the value of care amongst the pupils, as part of the Pet Care Programme.

### Programme Details

On 9 April 2008, the RPO Pet Pals Badge Programme was launched at Elias Park Primary School by the GOH, MP Lee Bee Wah, who had kindly accepted the invitation to share her story of 'Xiao Hei'.

### Planning

The CME committee was involved in the planning of the event. Teachers were given flexibility in managing the programme and added their own activities to the list of suggested activities in Categories A and B (found in the RPO Pet Pals Badge Programme booklet provided by AVA). The CME committee selected two activities in Category B and planned the details of the activities suitable for P2 accordingly. The worksheets were adapted from Project Work Resource file and prepared in the respective MTL.



### The pupils say...

- 1) "I understand the value of responsibility better after the lessons on Pet Care. I will be responsible for all my decisions and actions."
- 2) "It is fun to work in a team to do the Pet Care Project and I like the cute badge."
- 3) "I will ask my parents to get me a pet dog when I am more responsible. I will stop pestering them to get one for my next birthday!"
- 4) "It is fun having pets but the responsibility and taking care of them is a long term commitment."

### The teachers say...

- 1) "The RPO programme inculcates our school value of "Love" amongst our pupils!"
- 2) "The pupils are engaged in the RPO activities. Pupils show great enthusiasm when discussing issues of pet care."

### AVA's Note:

We were happy to attend Elias Park Primary's launch of the RPO Pet Pals Programme where we were heartened to see the support the school had for RPO education. The little stall we set up that afternoon did rip-roaring "business", providing us a great opportunity to interact with the enthusiastic students who came by to do the "A Pet is for Life" puzzles, pick up free publications, check out the posters and speak to us about their pets.



## AVA's RPO Skits Programme

The RPO Skits Programme aims to provide an opportunity for students to express their creativity and hone those acting skills whilst doing something meaningful about RPO and animal welfare.

It is easy to get started on this Programme as AVA is providing everything needed to stage a

**RPO Skit**, including:

- **Scripts**
- **Music**
- **Loan of costumes**

All the school needs to provide are the actors and actresses!

Students can encourage and teach their fellow students to be responsible pet owners when they perform for the whole school.

They may even stage the skit at AVA's annual RPO Roadshow or other events to help the friends, relatives and the general public learn about RPO!

### What are the skits about?

The two main characters, Sherlock Combs and Dr Whatsup? (a quirky pet detective and veterinarian respectively), solve RPO cases. Students follow their adventures and in the process learn some RPO dos and don'ts. The funny spoofs throughout the skits make it interesting to both performers and audiences alike. Students can also try their hand at script writing and inject their own creative interpretation of the scripts.

### Want to know more?

For more information on this programme, please contact **Ms Sherry Nee**, at tel: 63257420 or email: [sherry\\_nee@ava.gov.sg](mailto:sherry_nee@ava.gov.sg)

Perform the RPO Skit  
at our RPO Roadshow!  
Enquire with Sherry for  
details.

Beatty Secondary School took up the RPO Skits challenge and performed the play for their fellow students. Here's feedback from two of the students involved and the teacher-in-charge.

"It was fun coming together with my classmates to produce the play. We had no experience at all in drama, let alone having to produce and perform in front of the whole school. But the interesting storyline and the fact that we were spreading a very meaningful message made it a lot of fun to put the scenes together"  
Wong Shwu Lih (3N3)



"We were very apprehensive at first when the idea came from our form teacher. But after coming together to brainstorm and with our determination to put the play together, we never looked back. We hope this will spur other students in spreading the message of responsible pet ownership."  
Daniel Fung (3N3)



"It all started when I attended the RPO (Ambassador) talk for teachers organized by AVA. After a few email correspondences and meetings, I chanced upon the opportunity for my students to contribute. I really admire the efforts put in by the AVA staff, especially Ms Sherry Nee, for her commitment and passion. I was able to somehow rub this onto the students and it was great to have participated in this meaningful journey, which we are hoping to continue in years to come."  
Tham Chien Ping (Form Teacher, 3N3)



### Fun & Educational Excursions

RPO workshops at the Centre for Animal Welfare & Control (CAWC)

Want your students to enjoy a really meaningful excursion from which they learn about animal welfare and responsible pet ownership? Embark on a Learning Journey at AVA's Centre for Animal Welfare & Control (CAWC).

Our one and a half hour RPO workshops feature an informative talk and Q and A session, poster gallery tour and quiz, and hands on interaction with pets such as rabbits, hamsters, gerbils and cats.

Your students should take away a sense of responsibility towards the welfare of animals, the knowledge of how to play a part in reducing pet abandonment and more detailed information on how to handle and care for a pet should they so decide to keep one.



#### Comments from teachers who attended the workshops with their students:

“Well organised programme. It was good to have some hands on (handling of animals) for the students. The quiz at the end of the briefing was good to test the students' understanding.”

Ms Esther Teo  
Woodlands Ring Primary

“Thank you very much for the job well done. Both teachers and students enjoyed themselves greatly and learnt a great deal too from the trip.”

Ms Junaidah Jaffar  
Tao Nan School



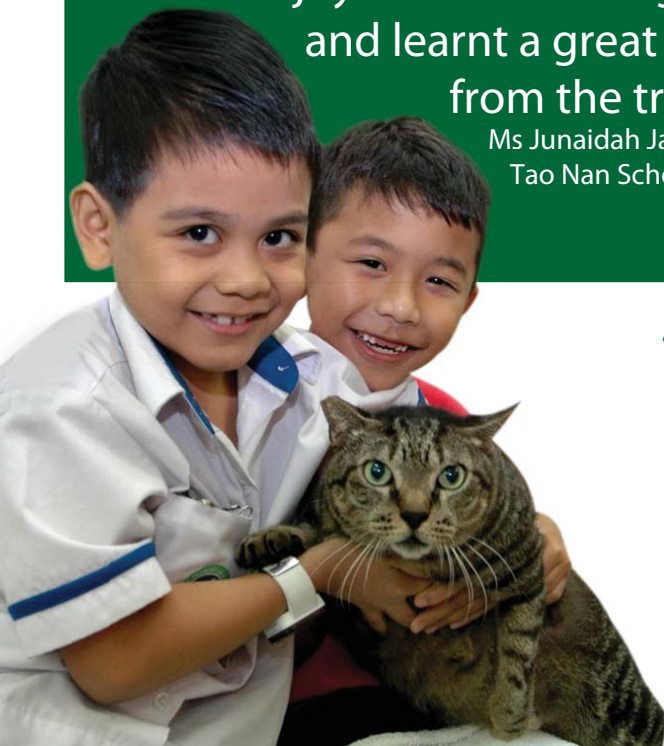
Christina with students of Woodlands Ring Primary School

## Book a session today!

Bookings are available through

✿ Ms Christina Tan, at 63257417 or email: christina\_tan@ava.gov.sg

✿ Learning Journeys Website at [www.learningjourneys.edu.sg](http://www.learningjourneys.edu.sg).



## Q: Will sterilisation cause the extinction of pets such as cats and dogs?

**A:** Pet sterilisation is a recommended routine surgical procedure to prevent pet breeding and therefore, unwanted litters. The question of extinction due to sterilisation is one that has been asked many a time by curious owners and non-owners alike. The interest in this question probably lies with the word "extinction" which is a serious and final state. However, extinction through sterilisation is highly unlikely as there is a huge population of cats and dogs in the world and pets can have many more babies in a shorter time than humans can.



In Singapore, 15,000-20,000 cats and dogs are put down yearly. Many of these could have been great family pets but there are just not enough homes for them. Breeding a pet could add to this number because it is not easy to guarantee good homes for every offspring – not everyone wants a pet and not everyone will be a good pet owner.

When owners breed their pets, the babies also take away homes from those that are already homeless on the streets. This means **breeding could indirectly cause the deaths of these homeless animals** that have to be put down. Sterilisation prevents unwanted litters and thereby avoids the situation of having unwanted pets that have to be put down.

There also health and behavioural advantages to sterilising a pet. In both male and female pets sterilisation can prevent cancers of the reproductive organs, particularly if the operation is done in a young animal. Sterilised pets are also no longer driven by hormonal demands to find a mate, and are therefore generally calmer, more relaxed and make better house pets.

To prevent unwanted breeding in pets eg hamsters, which are not suitable for sterilisation male and female animals should be housed separately.

Many myths and misunderstandings cause owners to hesitate to have their pets sterilised but hopefully owners will come to understand the reasons and benefits of sterilisation as they find out more through the RPO programmes and other information avenues.

**More information can be obtained through our "Sterilisation" brochure available for free download from our website at [www.ava.gov.sg](http://www.ava.gov.sg) under the RPO Education Section.**

**WHAT IS STERILISATION?**  
Physical sterilisation involves the surgical removal of part of the reproductive organs from an animal to make it unable to reproduce. The operation is performed on the male and the female separately. A sterilised male animal is also said to be castrated or neutered and a sterilised female animal is spayed. Sterilisation is done mostly in the pet dog, cat and rabbit.

**WHEN SHOULD I GET MY PET STERILISED?**  
Most veterinarians recommend that the pet can ideally be sterilised once it is past 6 months of age, as it is believed that by then the pet is sufficiently mature and has attained close to its adult size.

**WHY SHOULD I GET MY PET STERILISED?**  
To prevent unwanted litters. Physical sterilisation is the single most effective and humane method to control the growth of an animal population. It can diminish suffering of stray and unwanted animals.

**IS STERILISATION SAFE? IS IT PAINFUL?**  
Sterilisation is very safe. Your pet will not experience any pain during the procedure as it will be sleeping under a general anaesthetic. During recovery the sedative and anaesthetic will continue to have effect for sometimes up to your pet will not feel much pain. Most pets will resume their normal activity within 48 hours of waking up from the surgery.

**HAVE YOUR STERILISED PET TATTOOED?**  
Most of the time one can tell whether a male animal has been sterilised but not so for female animals. In the female there is no visible external sign left over from the surgery the only way to be sure whether it has been sterilised is for the veterinarian to perform an exploratory surgery. Such a situation usually arises where a pet is returned and the base owner does not know its past history.

**STERILISATION**

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