

Responsible Pet Ownership Ambassador Newsletter

June 2009
Issue 5



Main Article

Being a Considerate Pet Owner

As the saying goes, "No man is an island" and it is ever more so here in Singapore where sometimes, only a wall separates one and one's pet from the neighbours. Thus, being a considerate pet owner can contribute much to pleasant neighbourly relations and a good living environment. In this issue, we will discuss being a considerate dog owner and in the next issue we will go on to cats, pocket pets and terrapins.

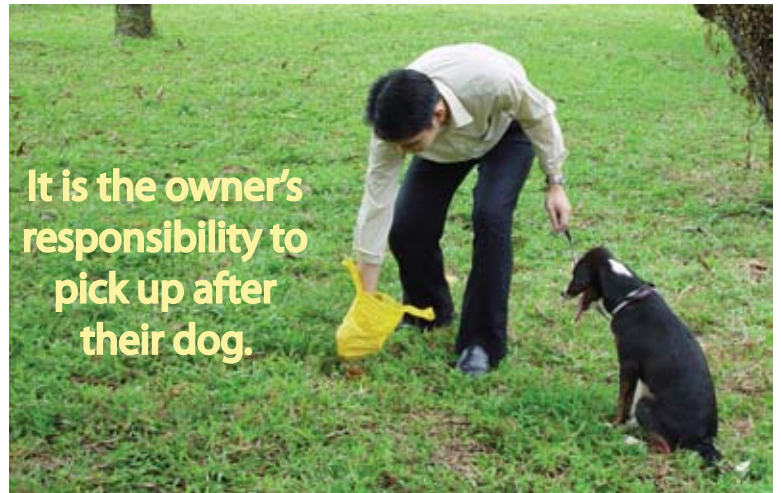
Being a considerate dog owner and good neighbour

Dogs can make wonderful companions but unfortunately they are also one of the pets most widely complained against. This is not surprising as they can often be seen (e.g. during walks in public places) and heard by others. Dog owners can avoid having their pets become a nuisance through proper care and supervision, obedience training, sufficient socialisation and adherence to the pet laws.

At home, excessive barking can be a really big problem. Everyday activities such as sleeping, studying or taking care of a baby can become impossible and frustrating if there is a dog barking non-stop. If the barking is very loud, it can also affect hearing. In addition, persistent barkers tend to be ignored, so when there is a real problem or danger, barking will not attract the help or attention needed. To resolve this, owners can first analyze the cause of the barking. Dogs are social animals and they use their bark as a form of communication, such as to alert owners to danger or to the presence of a stranger at the gate. They may also bark when they are excited or bored. Owners can therefore find out whether there is something disturbing or exciting the dog, such as another pet, or perhaps people walking past with their dogs. If so, removing the disturbance or changing the location of the dog would be the fastest solution. Generally, the use of training and socialization together is the best way to control barking. Obedience training will help the dog understand and obey commands such as "Quiet" and socialization will help it realise when barking is more appropriate. Owners also need to ensure they have sufficient time to spend with their pet. Dogs should not be left alone at home for the entire day.



Whilst owners may derive great joy from their dogs, it is important to consider those that do not like or are fearful of animals. Some people may be unable to be near them due to allergies. In public places, dogs should be kept on a properly fitting collar/harness and leash – using the wrong type will not give the owner sufficient control of the dog. Dog owners are required by law to leash a dog in public. Leashing prevents dogs from getting lost or disturbing/hurting others. When walking past other people or in enclosed places such as lifts and staircases, owners should ensure their dogs are close to their sides.



It is the owner's responsibility to pick up after their dog.

Owners should also be aware that there are some places dogs should not be brought, such as coffee shops and hawker centres. Dogs should also not be placed on the tables and chairs of such eating establishments. Playgrounds are also off-limits.

It is common for dogs to use their walks as a toilet break as well, and when this happens, owners should have a plastic bag or paper ready to clean up. Not doing so can lead to foul smells, staining, transmission of infectious/parasitic disease and fly nuisance. In addition, someone might accidentally step on it!

Having a pet is a personal choice but when it is a nuisance it can involve a lot of other people. Be a considerate pet owner and everyone will be happy, including your pet!

'BE A CONSIDERATE PET OWNER'

Children's Art Competition 2009

AVA is holding an art competition open to all children in primary one to six. Do encourage your students to join. The school with the most entries will also win a prize!



Prizes

Category	A	B	C
	Primary 1 & 2	Primary 3 & 4	Primary 5 & 6
Winning Entry	\$200	\$200	\$200
Merit (x5)	\$50	\$50	\$50
School with most entries	\$600		

Closing Date

All entries must reach AVA by 28 September 2009

Results

Winners will be notified in October 2009.

For more information and application forms, please visit www.ava.gov.sg

Rules & Regulations for Dog Owners

Some things for dog owners to note...

Licensing

All dogs above 3 months of age must be licensed. Licensing is necessary for rabies control. Rabies is a disease that can kill. It is passed from infected dogs to humans through a dog bite or saliva. Singapore is currently free from the rabies but many of the countries in the region are not. This means that the risk of the disease being inadvertently brought into Singapore is always present. In the case of such an occurrence, dog licensing will allow AVA to quickly contact dog owners to control the spread of the disease. It also makes it easier to find your pet if it gets lost. Keeping an unlicensed dog is an offence and could result in a fine of up to \$5000. Owners can obtain a licence for their dog online at <http://www.ava.gov.sg> or from AVA's Centre for Animal Welfare & Control (CAWC) located at 75 Pasir Panjang Rd.

Leashing

Dogs must be properly confined within the owner's premises. If the dogs are in a public place, they must be on leash and properly supervised and controlled. Dogs belonging to breeds listed under the Schedule in the Rules (such as the German Shepherd Dog and Rottweiler) must also be muzzled.

Out of Bounds

Dogs and other pets are also not allowed in eating establishments except pet cafes, unless they are guide dogs.

Housing & Development Board (HDB) Rules

Under the Housing and Development Board (Animals) Rules 1989, HDB allows only one dog of an approved small breed per residential unit. A full list of approved breeds is available at www.ava.gov.sg.

Cleaning Up

When you walk your dog, you must also clean up after him/her when it poos. Be prepared to do so by bringing along a plastic bag.

Beyond the basic regulations, responsible dog owners should also be considerate to others by making sure their dogs are not a nuisance (e.g. excess barking, bad behaviour, aggressiveness). The best way to ensure an obedient dog is to train him/her or enroll in a dog obedience class with your dog!

Providing a suitable home for your rabbit

- A Cage is not the ONLY option

By Ms Betty Tan, President, House Rabbit Society Singapore (HRSS)



Do you know that most rabbits actually do not like to be kept inside a cage?

Rabbits are natural prey animals that are built with strong hind legs that enable them to run fast. Thus, they enjoy having a lot of space for them to exercise their hind legs every day.

Caged rabbits can suffer from health problems like sore hocks (from standing long term on metal grilles), muscular atrophy, obesity from the lack of exercise and also behavioral problems such as aggressiveness to humans from the lack of human contact. Rabbits kept in cages tend to be left alone often and become neglected by their owners.

The House Rabbit Society (Singapore) actively advocates cage-free housing for rabbits. Rabbits, like dogs and cats, can be given free roam of the house with proper bunny-proofing in place. Rabbits are intelligent animals that can be easily litter-trained to use their toilet. Apart from a free-roaming arrangement, rabbits can also be kept in a playpen setup. A playpen setup provides ample space for a rabbit to hop and exercise and helps keep them safe from any dangerous items like electrical wires and household products such as detergent, bleach, etc. Rabbits that are allowed to free roam or that are housed in a playpen setup usually have a stronger bond with their owners as owners can reach out to interact with them more frequently.

Want to see a binky?

Rabbits that are in playpen setups usually enjoy a happier life and often show their contentment by doing a fast jump in the air coupled with twists of the body and head. This very interesting movement is much like a happy rabbit dance and is known as a BINKY. Not all rabbits will binky easily but when it happens, it is usually quite a sight!

Rabbit-proofing your House

Similar to baby-proofing, rabbit-proofing a home means taking precautionary steps to make the house safe for the rabbit. Rabbits are curious and natural chewers, so rabbit-proofing one's home helps to keep your rabbit and your furniture and belongings safe.

Things to bunny-proof:

Electrical Cords and Wires

Electrical cords and wires should be properly covered with hard plastic sleeves or flex tubing which can be found in most hardware stores but the best would be to keep all wires out of the reach of your bunnies.

Hazardous Cleaning Supplies

Detergents such as floor cleaners can be deadly to rabbits when consumed. They should be kept in areas away and inaccessible by the rabbit.

Protection of your furniture

The legs of your furniture can be wrapped in packaging tape (double-sided tape works best), bubble wrap, cardboard or plastic sleeves cut to fit.

Owners should also provide "chewing alternatives" like carton boxes and toilet rolls as toys for the rabbits to keep them occupied and entertained.

Operation No Release

Preventing abandonment and release of animals in the Nature Reserves

By Mr Roy Tan, Senior Outreach Officer (Central Nature Reserve), National Parks Board (NParks)



Over the Vesak Day weekend (9 and 10 May), National Parks Board (NParks) Central Nature Reserve (CNR) branch held an event, **Operation No Release**, to increase public awareness on the rationale of not releasing animals into the nature reserves. This also included educating young children on being responsible for their pets and not abandoning them when they are no longer cute.

Students from Catholic High, Anglo Chinese School Independent, Nanyang Girls' and Methodist Girls' School, together with Nparks CNR Volunteers, volunteers from Buddhist Fellowship, Public Utilities Board (PUB), non governmental organisations (NGOs) and NParks' staff took part in this operation and acted as ambassadors to educate the public on the harm of releasing animals into the nature reserves (see side column). In addition to the outreach, these students and volunteers also assisted in keeping a lookout for any case of animal release or pet abandonment.

To complement the efforts of the students and volunteers, a group of students from Raffles Girls' School held an exhibition at MacRitchie Reservoir's bandstand. During the exhibition, the students shared with children and their parents on the plight of released animals and encouraged the children to think carefully before taking up the responsibility of owning pets. The children were also given magnets to display in their homes to remind them that keeping pets is not like having toys because they have to show nurturing care for the animals till the end!

Why not release?*

Cruel and harmful

"Most people do not realise that releasing animals means sending them to their deaths. One recent incident I encountered was the release of a few soft-shell terrapins. They were not equipped to survive in the wild, and died on that very day. Should these animals harbour viruses, they will contaminate the water and affect other native wildlife. We want to appeal to everyone to refrain from releasing your pets or animals into the wild."

- Ms Sharon Chan, Assistant Director at Nparks

Release is not always a kind act

"Being kind to animals is one of the core practices in Buddhism. However, freeing animals into the wild, especially those that have been bred in captivity, is not necessarily a kind act as these animals would be easy prey for predators. In some cases, they end up disrupting the ecosystem, thus affecting native animals in their habitat and in turn being cruel to the existing animals in the wild. Buying trapped animals to free them will also encourage the trade, causing more animals to be trapped. *Instead, kindness towards animals can be achieved by reducing or eradicating the consumption of all kinds of meat, adopting and caring for animals from shelters, helping injured animals and preserving their natural habitats.*"

- Ms Angie Monksfield, President of Buddhist Fellowship

* Extracted from the NParks website (www.nparks.gov.sg), dated 7 May 2009

Singapore Animal Welfare Symposium 2009

By Ms Amy Corrigan, Director of Education & Zoocheck, Animal Concerns Research and Education Society

The second Singapore Animal Welfare Symposium, co-organised and hosted by the National University of Singapore (NUS)'s Student's Animal Welfare Group and Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES), was held on Saturday, 16 May 2009 at NUS.

Open to all, the Symposium was meant to serve as a platform for the public, animal-related organisations and government bodies to convene and discuss animal welfare issues affecting domestic and wild animals.

This year's lively discussions on the topics of *Wild Animals in Entertainment and Domestic Animal Welfare*, with panelists from local animal protection groups and the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA), highlighted these pressing concerns. Together, we successfully addressed these animal welfare issues and came up with effective strategies to end animal exploitation and suffering.

Highlights of this year's Symposium included the inspiring presentations by recipients of the first-ever national Animal Protectors Grant, a scheme launched at last year's Symposium. The Grant provided funding for eight groups to carry out projects that were aimed at improving animal welfare in Singapore. These eight groups, predominantly comprising youths, shared how their projects had significantly progressed animal protection efforts in Singapore and made long-term positive impacts on animal welfare. The nature of their projects ranged from raising awareness on living in harmony with long-tailed macaques to making educational storybooks for children to sterilisation projects for stray cats. The Symposium also saw the launch of the 2009 Animal Protectors Grant, more details of which are available now at www.animalwelfare.sg.

For those who were new to the animal welfare scene, the Symposium was a wonderful opportunity to take a first step on the rewarding path to becoming an advocate for animals. The Symposium was also a great chance for animal lovers from all walks of life to meet with like-minded people, chat with local animal welfare experts and learn how to do more to help our furred, feathered and scaled friends!



AVA @ the beach

On April 5, AVA was down at the beach (East Coast Park), to have some fun and sun with visitors to SPH's "Passion by the Beach" pet event.



Visitors picked up RPO tips and the invaluable message that "A Pet is for Life" through the RPO games at our booth.



Newly launched puzzles, with the theme, "Be a Responsible Pet Owner", were a hit with visitors, many of whom tried their hand at fitting the puzzles together as fast as they could.

Need RPO Teaching Resources?

We would be glad to provide some!

Contact Ms Sherry Nee at tel: 6325 7420 or email: sherry_nee@ava.gov.sg to confirm availability for loan and to arrange for collection time. All items can be picked up and returned at our office at 5 Maxwell Road, #04-00 Tower Block, MND Complex, S(069110)

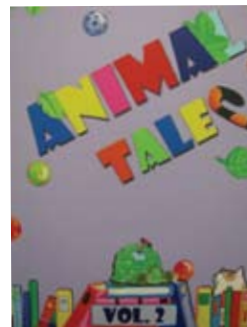
a. A1 sized posters on various RPO themes.



b. A3 sized jigsaw puzzles



c. A3 sized storytelling book



d. Costumes for RPO Skits



We'd love to visit your school!

We would be happy to come to your school to give a RPO presentation, consisting of a talk, Q and A and free tokens and publications. There is a wide range of topics on animal welfare and responsible pet ownership to choose from and if you can't find the exact talk you're looking for, you're also welcome to contact us to discuss the topics! All talks are free!

To book a talk, contact Ms Adeline Chin at Tel: 6325 7542 or email: adeline_chin@ava.gov.sg



Q: How do I train my pet?

A: Different pets respond to different training techniques. If you don't see results, it could be that you are not using the correct technique. However, always train with patience and love! Remember that you should never lose your temper and hurt your pet during training. Training will take up a lot of your time so put aside some time on a regular basis for it.

In general, choose a quiet place where you and your pet can focus. Use rewards such as play, praise or food to reinforce positive behaviour i.e. when your pet has performed the trick, command or desirable behaviour (like going to the toilet in its litter box), give a reward. Soon, your pet will understand that obeying the command or performing that behaviour will mean getting a reward.

Remember to keep your expectations realistic. Some types of pets or some individual pets may not be able to learn the tricks or commands that you want quickly or maybe not at all. Respect your pet and make training sessions fun for both of you and not a torture or chore.

For more specific step by step instructions to different training techniques check out training guides/books. A good way of training a pet dog is to go to dog training school with it.

Training your pet, especially a dog, is a really good idea because it helps you bond and understand your pet better. It can help to keep your pet out of trouble too!



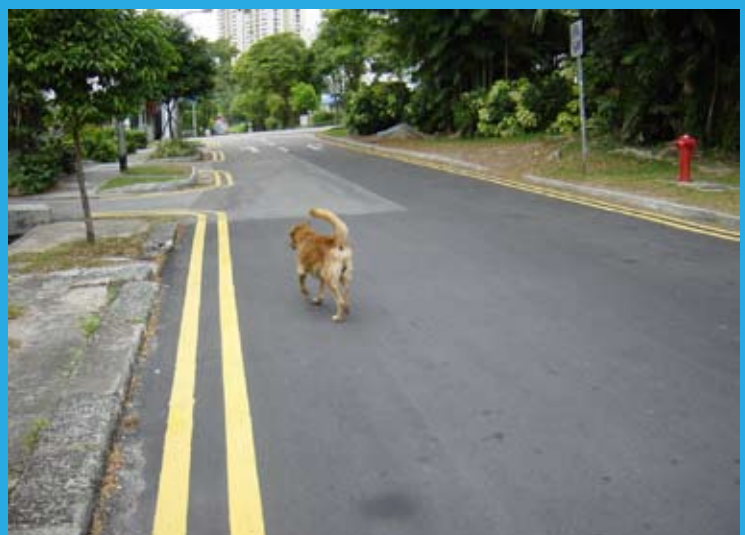
Q: Where do stray animals come from?

A: Strays come about when owners :

- Abandon their pets – these unwanted pets become strays and if unsterilised, breed to produce more strays
- Do not sterilise their pets but allow them to produce unwanted litters
- Practice “loose ownership” (allowing their pets to stray outdoors)

Feeding strays and not sterilising them will also promote the increase of stray animals.

Many people may wrongly believe that it is kinder to release their pet outdoors than to put it down when they don't want it anymore. They do not realise that pets that are released become strays that are open to abuse, starvation, traffic accidents, fights, disease, etc. Pet abandonment should never be an option!



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