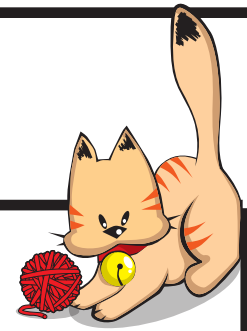


# RPO Resources

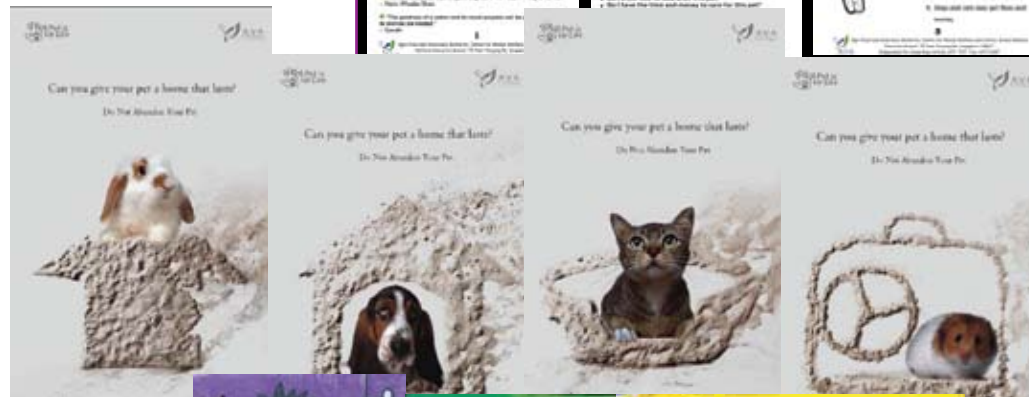
## RPO Resources Available



### B. Workbook

A workbook comprising educational and informative RPO activity sheets such as crosswords & quizzes. There is also a companion Teachers Guide with additional explanations, teaching instructions and answers.

Download the workbook for free from the AVA website under the RPO Education Section.



### C. Posters & Postcards

Posters are usually distributed as tokens/prizes at school talks and at some public events and exhibitions. Postcards can be picked up from Zocard racks around the island as long as stocks last. For additional copies, you may contact us to enquire on availability.



### D. Pocket Calendars

Since 2004, pocket calendars with the annual theme have been distributed to schools and at the RPO Roadshow. RPO Ambassadors are the first to be informed and given the opportunity to make requests for their entire school population of teachers and students.



## Update of Particulars

As regular updates (such as this newsletter) will be sent to you via email, it is important for us to have your correct contact particulars. Please inform Ms Sherry Nee at 63257420 or email: [sherry\\_nee@ava.gov.sg](mailto:sherry_nee@ava.gov.sg) if you have changed your contact or if you are moving to another school.

# RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP

## AMBASSADOR NEWSLETTER

December 2007 Issue 1

### News

#### New dog licensing rules

With effect from 1st Sep 2007, the Animals and Birds (Dog Licensing and Control) Rules were changed for better management of the dog population, to instil responsible pet ownership and discourage pet abandonment. The changes that existing and potential dog owners should take note of are:

**Microchipping:** All licensed dogs have to be microchipped with an ISO compliant microchip. Microchipping is a more effective and permanent identification system than dog badges. It will also help return lost dogs to their owners.

**License Fees:** The annual licence fee for all unsterilised dogs (both male and female) will be \$70 and for sterilised dogs it will be \$14. This fee alignment takes into account that unsterilised male and female dogs are equally responsible for breeding. This will encourage dog owners to sterilise their dogs to help prevent unwanted litters.

**Penalties:** To discourage dog owners from keeping unlicensed dogs, letting their dogs stray or not muzzling dogs of certain breeds in a public place (e.g., the Rottweiler or Mastiff); the maximum fine for such offences has been raised from \$500 to \$5,000.

#### AVA RPO Roadshow 2007

A big 'Thank You' to all RPO Ambassadors who came down to support the roadshow that was held on 17 & 18 November 2007 at Ngee Ann City Civic Plaza. For those who were unable to attend, here are some highlights:

**In a nutshell:**  
**AVA's Responsible Pet Ownership (RPO) Public Education Programme**

**Objective:** To increase responsible pet ownership and animal welfare awareness.

**Inception:** October 2004


**Over-arching Theme:** A Pet Is For Life

**Key Messages:**

- Do not abandon your pets
- Do not get a pet on impulse
- Sterilise your pet
- Be a considerate pet owner

**Activities:**

- Mass media campaign
- Collaboration with the pet industry and related organisations
- School programme for students and teachers
- Community programme for the general public
- Events and other communication activities




Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman, Parliamentary Secretary for National Development, was the Guest of Honour for the event.



Interactive displays showed the hard facts of abandonment, including the sad plight of abandoned animals.



Informative stage events by the animal welfare groups gave wonderful insights into pet care.



The "Ask the Vet" Booth gave the public a great opportunity to discuss with a veterinarian about their pet's health.



Stage games were both fun and educational, teaching participants about responsible pet ownership.



Animal welfare groups booths at the event attracted public interested to support and learn more about them.

# • Feature Articles

## Do Not Abandon Your Pet

This year's focal message and theme for the RPO Public Education Programme is "Do Not Abandon Your Pet".




For most children, the decision to acquire a pet would rest on the parents. However, parents sometimes give in to their children's requests for a pet against their better judgment. Whilst keeping a pet can teach children responsibility and more about other living things, it may also give children the wrong idea that pets are disposable if the pets are eventually neglected or abandoned.

Children may think that if they don't want their pet anymore, there is another home, another owner for it. They may not realise the severity or consequences of abandoning their pet. This is where it is important to teach them that pets are living things and that we should be committed to a pet for its entire life span. We can also share that abandoned pets do not have a good life on the streets and abandonment is not a "freedom" but a cruelty, and that **euthanasia is a very possible end of pet abandonment.**

Helping students understand and prepare for their responsibilities can prevent situations in which they get a pet but lack the time or resources to care for it. Hopefully students who learn the RPO messages will bring them back home too.



## Unfortunate pets

	Road to abandonment	Points to note before getting this pet
 <p><b>Terrapins</b></p>	<p>Terrapins seem to be a young child's friend that doesn't get to grow up with them, despite the fact that their average life span is 30 years.</p> <p>When young, they are easily accommodated but after one year, they can reach a length of 30 cm. Owners then find them dirty, stinky or even aggressive. They may even abandon their once cherished pets to the reservoirs, ponds and other outdoor ponds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· A very long term commitment is needed so consider very carefully.</li> <li>· Requires a large area, preferably a pond, not an aquarium.</li> <li>· Diet and shell care are very important.</li> <li>· Not affectionate or responsive so owners must be aware and accepting</li> <li>· Should not be abandoned at any time, even in ponds where there are terrapins! Abandonment is against the law.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Hamsters</b></p>	<p>Hamsters are often treated as a 'starter pet', believed to be easiest to care for. Unfortunately once the novelty wears off, owners may find it a chore to take care of them and may not invest much effort to find out more about them.</p> <p>Some owners also find it 'fun' to breed their hamsters, creating overpopulation problems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Some hamsters bite and are not easy to handle; owners must be patient and gentle.</li> <li>· Breeding is strongly discouraged to avoid overpopulation.</li> <li>· Owners need to find out their hamsters' special traits to avoid fighting and deaths; keep solitary hamsters singly and feed appropriate food at all times.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Rabbits</b></p>	<p>Rabbits are regarded by many as "nice cuddly pets". However, in reality, rabbits do not generally like to be hugged or picked up.</p> <p>Rabbits are as time consuming to take care for as a cat, as you need to change the litter daily and they require grooming. Besides this, owners may be upset when rabbits bite and kick, usually when the owner wants to 'cuddle' it. When the rabbit grows bigger, it loses its baby cuteness and becomes a burden. Some owners may then decide to abandon the rabbit in the park, thinking it can fend for itself.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Relatively long commitment is needed, and pet care is time consuming.</li> <li>· May not be suitable for children who expect to give and receive a lot of physical affection from the pet or who like to play rough with their pets.</li> <li>· Find out about its special care needs, such as dietary and grooming requirements.</li> <li>· Should ideally be kept indoors.</li> <li>· May ruin furniture, wires and other household objects through gnawing.</li> <li>· May never be fully litter-trained.</li> </ul>

# RPO Resources

## RPO Resources Available

### A. Free Publications

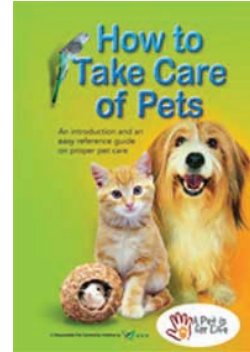
The following publications can be downloaded for free from the AVA website at [www.ava.gov.sg](http://www.ava.gov.sg) under the RPO Education Section. Hardcopies can be requested by contacting Ms Sherry Nee, at Tel:63257420. They may also be brought by the speaker to schools that request for AVA school talks.

### A Pet is for Life



A highlight of some important considerations in owning a pet. This will help potential owners make the right decision on pet ownership.

### How to Take Care of Pets



A handy A5 sized, 36-page full colour booklet with pictures on the nine common types of pets. This was produced especially for primary school children and is offered to all schools that hold AVA RPO talks. It is also given to schools that participate in the RPO Pet Pal Badge Programme.

### Informative Pamphlet Set



A set of five informative pamphlets entitled:  
a. Barking Dog  
b. Dog Bite  
c. Cats as Pets  
d. Sterilisation  
e. Lost & Found



### Pet Starter Kit



A handy compilation of information on the responsibilities of owning a pet, in four languages (English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil)



## Feature Articles

### Leaving pets in nature reserves, parks and reservoirs

By Ms Karen Teo, Senior Outreach Officer, Nparks



“Fluffy has been so lonely since Hamtaro died, let’s free her so that she can be happy.”

Here’s a thought that has crossed many a pet-owner’s mind whenever their conscience pricked them about their caged pets. Therefore, many would resort to setting their domesticated pets free into the nature reserves, parks or reservoirs. Little did they realize that this new ‘freedom’ will cause the demise of these domesticated animals. Most animals released in the parks and nature reserves stand a poor chance of survival. Domesticated animals like hamsters, rabbits and quails are unable to fend for themselves in the forests and they often die a slow and painful death. There is a reason why they are called domesticated and not wild.

In addition, those that survive may disrupt the ecological balance of our forests and water bodies, causing irreversible damage. For example, the red-eared terrapins can compete with our native species for food and space. This could lead to the eventual extinction of our native species – the Malayan box terrapin and spiny hill terrapin.

Moreover, it is against the law to release any animals into the nature reserves, parks and reservoirs and to abandon your pets. Any of such acts can warrant a fine or imprisonment or both.

So, think before you release because it could mean death.



#### Number of animals that were put down in 2006:

Dogs: 4830

Cats: 9960

Small Mammals: 1200



#### What does the law say about abandonment?

It is an offence to abandon your pet. The penalty for abandonment is a fine of up to \$10,000, or 12 months imprisonment or both. As a responsible pet owner, abandoning your pet should never be an option. Even if you find that you absolutely cannot take care of your pet anymore, please do not abandon it!

# RPO Ambassador Programme

## Inaugural Responsible Pet Ownership (RPO) Meet-The-Ambassadors Session

Since the programme's inception in late 2006, AVA had been looking forward to meeting the RPO Ambassadors. The sessions which were held on 19 and 20 April 2007, kicked off with an introduction of the aims and goals of the RPO Ambassadorship. Two new education programmes, the RPO Pet Pal Badge Programme and the RPO Skits Programme, were also launched to the RPO Ambassadors.

Lastly we shared with the RPO Ambassadors on upcoming programmes and plans and possible new initiatives. We also invited comments on what they wanted or expected out of the RPO Ambassador Programme. After the formal presentation ended, there was opportunity to network and chat with Ambassadors in other schools who had similar projects or objectives. This ended our session but we were already looking forward to growing the programme together with all the RPO Ambassadors!

**Thank you to all Ambassadors who took precious time to come meet with us.**



## What is the RPO Ambassador Programme all about?

### Purpose of the RPO Ambassador Programme:

- To raise awareness of animal welfare and promote responsible pet ownership amongst teachers and students
- To build a gracious society by instilling values of kindness, respect and compassion in our children.

### How the RPO Ambassador Programme works:

A representative is nominated from the school as a RPO Ambassador to work in partnership with AVA in RPO/Animal Welfare Education. The RPO Ambassador will then play an important role in implementing RPO activities/programmes in their school.

### The RPO Ambassadors will

- be informed of new AVA RPO events and activities (eg. talks, exhibitions, contests, programmes etc).
- receive support and advice from AVA for any animal welfare/RPO related school projects or initiatives.
- be the first to receive the latest RPO resources and publications (e.g. pocket calendars, posters, etc.)

### Nomination of RPO Ambassadors:

Any teacher or staff member with an interest in animal welfare/RPO issues and championing these in their school can join.

## FAQs

### 1. How will the RPO Ambassador Programme impact the school?

The Ambassador Programme will provide a neater and more targeted and efficient method of distributing RPO materials and resources to schools. With the knowledge that these resources exist and are free to use, we hope that teachers/schools are encouraged to promote RPO amongst the students. Though AVA visits schools regularly to conduct school talks, teachers who see the students on a regular and continuous basis can help students retain and understand the RPO messages.

### 2. What is the workload?

This is determined by you as the programmes can be taken up at the teacher's/school's discretion. The Ambassadors also need not take on the project themselves but can pass the information on to colleagues and other teachers.

### 3. Must we take up the programmes or go for the events?

No, all activities are optional.

### 4. Do I need to have a pet to join?

No, it is not necessary.

### 5. Who nominates the RPO Ambassadors?

The ambassador can be chosen by the principal or if any teacher is interested, they can nominate themselves as long as the school has been informed and is agreeable.

## Tell us about it

Help us improve and develop the RPO Ambassador Programme by giving your comments, suggestions & questions to:

Ms Sherry Nee, Tel: 6325 7420, Email: [sherry\\_nee@ava.gov.sg](mailto:sherry_nee@ava.gov.sg)

Contributions for future issues of this newsletter are welcome such as:

- Something you would like to share with other RPO Ambassadors.
- A personal animal welfare experience/opinion or teaching tool/activity.
- A showcase of your school's efforts in RPO/animal welfare education. Include pictures if you can.
- Other information

Or if you would like to but don't know what to contribute, drop us a line to discuss; we may be able to find something for you!



# RPO School Programme

## RPO Pet Pal Badge Programme

The RPO Pet Pal Badge Programme encourages students to learn more about RPO through participating in RPO-related activities to earn a RPO Pet Pal Badge. The Programme was designed to run fairly autonomously and be simple to complete so that teachers could manage the programme on top of regular schoolwork. Flexibility was also built in to allow teachers to integrate this with ongoing or pre-planned projects.

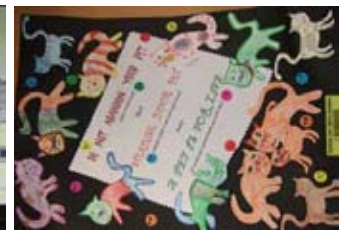
In April this year, the RPO Pet Pal Badge Programme was launched to the RPO Ambassadors. Shortly afterwards, a Pet Pal Badge Kit was sent to every primary school.

We are heartened to receive much support from schools. At present, nearly 6000 students have completed or are on the programme. The first school to complete the programme was Woodlands Primary School.

(Please contact Ms Sherry Nee at 63257420 if your school would like a Pet Pal Badge Programme Kit)



Courtesy of Evergreen Primary School



Courtesy of Woodlands Primary School



## RPO Skits Programme

The RPO Skits Programme was developed for Secondary Schools to reach out to more students in a way that would be fun and appealing to them. AVA has prepared everything necessary for schools to stage an RPO skit, such as specially commissioned scripts, music and loan of costumes for free. Not only can students learn through practising and staging it to spread the RPO messages to their friends, they may also have opportunities to do so at RPO events, such as the annual roadshow.

## Student Training Programme

Fourteen students of Beatty Secondary School attended the RPO Students Ambassador Training Programme in November 2007. Two half day workshops prepared them to be RPO ambassadors by equipping them with RPO knowledge and hands on training. Soon after, they had the opportunity to put their newfound knowledge and skills to good use by guiding younger primary students on a RPO Learning Journeys workshop and they also helped out at the RPO Roadshow 2007. We hope that they will continue to be RPO ambassadors at school and to their friends and family.



The RPO Student Ambassadors hard at work at the survey/quiz corner counter of the RPO Roadshow 2007

## RPO Talks

You can start to book your talks for 2008! The following are the most popular titles:

### 1. Responsible Pet Ownership (for primary):

This talk lays the foundation on the responsibilities involved with owning pets. Emphasis is on the message of keeping a pet for life.

### 2. Pets are like Us! (for lower primary):

This talk helps younger children to empathize with pets (as living things) and understand the importance of providing for their pets' needs for the rest of its life.

### 3. Strays and Abandonment (for all levels):

A look at the plight of stray/homeless pets and covers what we can do to prevent/avoid adding to the stray population, whether we are pet owners or not.

### 4. Pets and Us Part I (for secondary):

A foundation talk for secondary students that covers the responsibilities of pet ownership in depth, with examples, facts and figures and current information.



And many more...download a full list from AVA website at [www.ava.gov.sg](http://www.ava.gov.sg)

## • Feature Articles

### Abandoning your cats in the streets

By Ms Dawn Kua, Operations Manager, Director of Operations, Cat Welfare Society

When pets are adopted without consideration they too often end up abandoned on the streets. These former pets are also unable to care for themselves and end up getting abused, into accidents, or trapped and killed by town councils.

A big misconception that people have is that they can put a cat on the street and it will be fed and well taken care of by caregivers or passers-by. A home pet cannot survive on the streets, or even if it manages to, it is likely to fare very poorly. This is even if the cat used to be a community cat (stray cat) because the cat would have adapted to life in a home environment and have lost its instincts. No one would adopt a street child and then put the child back when he or she is older and assume that the child will cope. The same goes for a cat.

You can always spot the abandoned cats in a given area because of the vacant, lost look they have, and often the badly kept fur – especially if is long furred. They are skittish and frightened. An abandoned cat may not even get to remain in the same area it was left in as cats are territorial and will chase newcomers away, especially if the existing cats are sterilised.

It is worse if the abandoned cats are unsterilised. Not only do these cats add to the population of community cats, they often contribute to the population through mating

So before picking up a cat please consider the following :-

• Are you aware of what taking a cat in will entail? Are you prepared to pay for food, litter, scratching posts, toys and medical treatment for the rest of the cat's life?

• Does your lifestyle allow you to take in a pet? If you travel, will there be someone to look after the pet when you are away?

• Are you the main caregiver for the cat? If not, can you be certain the person will be committed to taking care of the cat?

• Are all your family members supportive of you taking the cat in?

• Are you willing and able to take the cat to the vet should it need medical attention?

• Will you be prepared to sterilise the cat? A sterilised pet is healthier, lives longer, and does not keep having kittens.

• If you are intending to leave the country will you be taking the cat with you?

If you are not sure that you have thought all these factors through, or whether you can answer yes to all the questions, then please do not adopt a cat. The decision to take a cat home should not be made lightly.

Of course, unexpected circumstances may arise that necessitate you rehoming your cat. Please remember to start looking for a new home as soon as possible, and not to wait till the last moment. Please also only consider rehoming as a final option.

As a final note, please do not pick up cats unnecessarily. Cat Welfare Society is often contacted by people who have seen a kitten or cat and decided to take it home. But they have no intention of keeping it and often put the cat back out again. Unless you are prepared to adopt the cat yourself, it is often better to run a Trap-Neuter-Return-Manage programme in the area and to leave the cat where it is. For more information, on TNRM, please go to our website at [www.catwelfare.org](http://www.catwelfare.org). We do not advocate removing cats unless there is a compelling reason to do so, such as if the cat's life is in danger. For example, please do not remove newborn kittens unless you are quite sure the mother has been gone for an extended period of time as the mother cat may just have gone to look for food. The best thing you can do for that cat may be NOT to take it home unless you are prepared to take it for life.

