

Responsible Pet Ownership Ambassador Newsletter

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Issue 7



Main Article

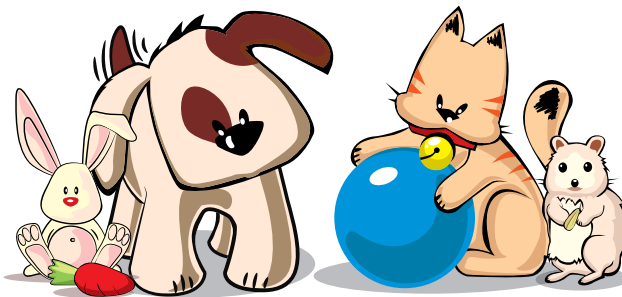
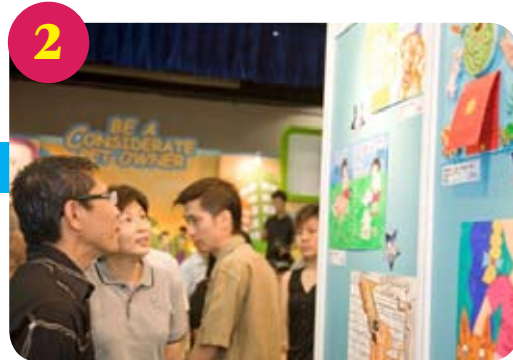
AVA Brings Responsible Pet Ownership Message to the Heartlands

For the first time, the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (AVA)'s annual Responsible Pet Ownership (RPO) events were held at the heartlands through a series of three Roadshows at the West Coast, Leng Kee and Anchorvale Community Centres on 15, 22 and 29 November 2009 respectively. At the Roadshows, animal welfare organisations, the National Parks Board (NParks) and the Housing Development Board (HDB) worked closely with AVA to promote responsible pet ownership and the year's theme of "Be a Considerate Pet Owner".

Visitors were treated to obedience demonstrations, an exciting RPO skit by AVA staff, informative pet care talks and interactive storytelling sessions for children by Singapore Polytechnic students. The importance of being a considerate pet owner was also told through attractive displays, quizzes, stage activities and demonstrations.

At the Roadshows finale on 29 November, Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman, Parliamentary Secretary for National Development presented the prizes to the winners of the Children's Art Competition 2009 (see page 3) and tokens of appreciation to the participating agencies.

Some highlights of the RPO Roadshows 2009:



- 1** Parliamentary Secretary for National Development Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman, AVA Chairman Mr Koh Soo Keong and AVA CEO Ms Tan Poh Hong launched the Roadshow finale at Anchorvale CC.
- 2** Winning entries of AVA's Children's Art Competition 2009 were on display at the Roadshows.
- 3** The crowds were wowed by stage activities such as dog obedience training demonstrations and talks.
- 4** Storytelling sessions were conducted on stage by students of Singapore Polytechnic.
- 5** AVA staff gave a stellar performance in a fun skit about the importance of responsible pet ownership.
- 6** A total of ten agencies comprising the Housing & Development Board, National Parks Board and eight animal welfare organisations supported the event.

Congratulations to the following winners of the RPO Children's Art Competition 2009:

Best Entry Award

Category A (Primary 1 and 2)

- Chan Kian Kai (Townsville Pri Sch)



Category B (Primary 2 and 3)

- Jay Ngiam Chao Yan (Woodlands Ring Pri Sch)



Category C (Primary 3 and 4)

- Ng Lu Yi (Zhenghua Pri Sch)



Merit Award

Category A (Primary 1 and 2)

- Insyirah Bte Sharil (Tampines North Pri Sch)
- Jeron Tan Kang (St Hilda's Pri Sch)
- Sherry Lye Xiang Jun (Tampines North Pri Sch)
- Tan Yew Lu Keefe (Rulang Pri Sch)
- Wong Ye Xuan (Rulang Pri Sch)

Category B (Primary 3 and 4)

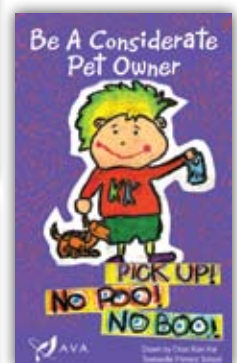
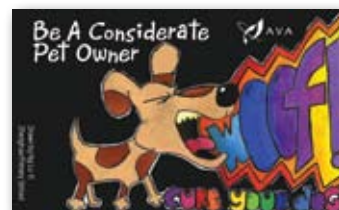
- Ang Jia Le (Rulang Pri Sch)
- Athirah Bte Hassan (Admiralty Pri Sch)
- Cheryl Poh (Yangzheng Pri Sch)
- Kim Ha Kyoung Jenny (Yangzheng Pri Sch)
- Loke Xin Yu Charmaine (Woodlands Ring Pri Sch)
- Tan Yenye (Penang Chinese Girls' Pri Sch)

Category C (Primary 5 and 6)

- Maisarah Bte Latiff (Woodlands Ring Pri Sch)
- Naomi Lee Eun Seo (Yuneng Pri Sch)
- Phee Min En, Quesheth (Clementi Pri Sch)
- Phou Thinzar Naing (Blangah Rise Pri Sch)
- Toh Rui Xin Seraphina (Clementi Pri Sch)

Pocket Calendars

Five of the winning designs were made into pocket calendars that were given out at the Roadshows. The pocket calendars were distributed to schools and the public.



Bringing in pets

Since 1 January 2010, AVA has allowed dogs and cats from certain low rabies risk countries to be imported without the need for quarantine. As with the practices of other developed countries, new management measures would need to be taken prior to exporting the pet, including microchip implantation, rabies vaccination and blood testing. These are to verify that the pet is protected against rabies.

Countries are organized in different categories based on rabies risk. Quarantine will not be required for import from countries in categories A and B as long as other conditions are met. Please see our website at www.ava.gov.sg for more information.

CATEGORY A

Australia, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, United Kingdom

CATEGORY B

Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, USA (Guam and Hawaii only)

CATEGORY C

Belgium, Canada, Netherlands, Spain, United States of America (except Guam and Hawaii)

CATEGORY D

All countries other than those listed in Categories A, B or C



Keeping rabies away

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 rabies and quarantine helps keep it that way. It is illegal to bring in a pet without quarantine if it is required. Anyone doing so could be fined up to \$10000 and/or jailed up to 12 months.



Improving pet shop standards

Starting January 2010, AVA will require pet shop owners and staff to attend training specially designed to help enhance pet shop standards and competencies. The training, which will be conducted by Temasek Polytechnic, will cover regulatory guidelines, occupational health and safety and pet care knowledge. Those selling dogs, cats and small mammals like rabbits and hamsters will be the first to attend, followed by the rest.

Abandoned at the nature reserve

By students from Nanyang Girls' who were on attachment with the National Parks Board's Central Nature Reserve branch from 17 - 30 Nov 2009



A female Maltese dog was found abandoned in the carpark of the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve at 6am on 25th November 2009. She was found shivering in a dirty "cage", a small basket that was barely larger than she was, with only a few sheets of newspaper as bedding. Ants were crawling inside the cage, attracted to some leftover food. She appeared to be rather old and was in poor health due to neglect. One of her eyes appeared to have a defect.

She was sent to a local animal welfare organisation and hopefully will find a new home. However, not all abandoned animals get a second chance. It is cruel to abandon a pet. Pet abandonment is also an offence. The Maltese was obviously very uncomfortable in the basket and would have suffered even more if not found earlier. Furthermore, an abandoned pet does not know how to take care of itself and can starve, become sick, be run over, be abused or get into fights. Owning a pet is a huge responsibility and a lifetime of dedication. We would like to appeal to all pet owners to be responsible for their pets, even in their final years.





Long-term friends

By Dr Megan Williamson BSc, BVMS
Director of Veterinary Care,
Animal Concerns Research and Education
Society (ACRES)

Owni^oning a red-eared slider as a pet can be fun and rewarding, but there is also some hard work involved to keep it healthy and happy. Red-eared sliders are not native to Singapore but come from the United States. A type of terrapin, the red-eared slider is a very popular pet worldwide, with over 4 million being traded annually around the globe and 400,000 coming into Singapore each year. Sadly, not all of these are well loved, and when some owners become tired of the responsibility they release them into local waterways. This has led to the reduction of native turtles in the wild because the red-eared sliders compete with the natives for food and space. Not all red-eared sliders can survive well outside by themselves and can starve, become run over by cars or drown in heavy rainfall. However, if you are committed to the 30-40 year responsibility, you will have a long-term friend.

Red-eared sliders are semi-aquatic, meaning that they spend some of the time swimming, but also need land to bask in the sun and dry off. Spending time in this way allows them to warm up, which keeps their immune system strong so they can fight off shell infections or pneumonia. If your red-eared slider does not have access to natural sunlight you will need to provide a UV lamp. This ensures that enough vitamin D is produced so that the shell and bones remain strong. Thus, provide that there are some dry areas (e.g. rocks) where they can rest.

Usually red-eared sliders are sold as hatchlings, but don't be fooled by their small size – they will grow quickly! Be prepared by buying a large tank that can hold at least 80-100 litres, so there is plenty of room for swimming. The tank length should be at least 4 times the length of the shell (carapace) length. Be prepared for the fact that an adult will grow to approximately 30cm in length. Build a landing area at one end for basking that the red-eared slider can easily climb onto

and be completely out of the water. An outdoor pond in the yard will ideally be the best place to keep a red-eared slider. **Most apartments are usually too small for a tank large enough to keep a red-eared slider comfortably.** Keep in mind that large tanks will also weigh a lot.

If your red-eared slider is too hot or too cold, it is likely to become ill. Keep the water temperature between 23-26°C. You will also need a filter to keep the water clean – sliders can be messy creatures!

Red-eared sliders are omnivorous, so they eat both animal and plant food. Younger red-eared sliders are fussy eaters that prefer meat, such as mealworms, earthworms, lean beef and cooked chicken. As they get older they will eat more vegetables and fruits such as carrots, apples and leafy greens. Commercial pellets should only be fed as a supplement, not as the sole food.

So if you choose to own a red-eared slider, please be a responsible owner and take care of your new friend for life. Protect our native turtles by keeping red-eared sliders out of our waterways.

In Singapore, the red-eared slider and the Asian Box Turtle are the only reptiles allowed to be sold and kept as pets. Under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act or Wild Animals and Birds Act, penalties may be imposed on any person selling or in possession of unapproved reptiles.

For a list of approved animals allowed for sale as pets, please refer to our website <http://www.ava.gov.sg>. If you know of any person or any shop in possession of, or selling unapproved pets, please contact AVA at Tel: 6227 0670. All information provided to AVA would be kept strictly confidential.

Spreading the RPO message

Twenty three students from Hong Kah Secondary School participated in our Student RPO Ambassador Programme this year not just to learn more about responsible pet ownership but also to help pass on the message to others. The one-day training provided by AVA staff helped to increase their knowledge of pet regulations, current pet trends, pet care and responsible pet ownership. Soon afterwards, they lent a hand at the AVA RPO roadshows, during which each student had the opportunity to help one of AVA's Public Education RPO partners, such as Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES), Animal Lovers League (ALL), Cat Welfare Society (CWS), House Rabbits Society (HRSS) and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA).

Her Kai Lin
(helped out at the Animal Concerns Research and Education Society booth)

"It was a good experience helping out at the AVA RPO Roadshow as I not only increased my knowledge on wildlife but I played a part in educating others too. The most memorable moments to me were when young children came up to our booth with a lot of questions and I was there to answer them and teach them the importance of not keeping illegal animals as pets. The opportunity to interact with the public taught me how to communicate well and has brought me greater confidence, which will definitely help me a lot in the future."



Herinna Hasnol
(helped out at the Cat Welfare Society booth)

"Helping out at the AVA RPO Roadshow has been a wonderful experience for me. It gave me the chance to learn more about being a responsible pet owner, especially how to pay more attention to my own pet. It also taught me about adoption and how it can save a stray's life."

In helping the society's volunteers, I learnt how it wasn't always easy to find good homes for the animals, even if they were really young. Three of the society's volunteers had brought a pair of kittens that were found at a void deck, hoping someone would adopt them. The girls wanted the two kittens to go to the same home because they were very attached to each other but despite trying very hard, they could not find anyone who wanted both of them.

I've also learnt that many stray cats are put to sleep as the society does not have any more space for them. Some strays are not able to make it on their own after being abandoned by their owners as they are not used to living on their own. Outdoors, they could get into an accident or a fight with other cats. However, it is not only cats that are in this situation. Dogs, hamsters, pet rabbits and other kind of pets are also being abandoned and put down. Realising this, I'm determined to be a responsible pet owner and not to abandon my pet, ever."





Adilah Bte Abdul Aziz (helped out at the Cat Welfare Society booth)

"The AVA RPO roadshow was really interesting and enjoyable. The best part was communicating with the volunteers and staff from the different organisations and learning more about animals, especially pets. In the future I will advise any friends or relatives who are interested to get pets that taking care of a pet is not easy. I also learnt that we should sterilise certain animals to prevent unwanted litters.

Observing the staff and volunteers answer public enquiries with confidence also helped me pick up communication skills, which I can use to speak to the public in future events.

It was a tiring day but definitely a meaningful one!"

Yasmin Niepelt (helped out at the Cat Welfare Society booth)

"After attending the AVA training and helping out at the RPO roadshow, I can proudly say that I am now a responsible pet owner. Firstly, I never knew what AVA was about. However, after attending the training, I realised that AVA plays a big role in our community in not just maintaining the safety and supply of the food we consume, but also animal welfare and control. Next, I also came to realise that pets are not just fun to play with but are also big responsibilities. Pets need more than just food and water - they also need care, attention and exercise. Sadly, not many people realise this. This is where I think the RPO roadshow comes in, as it can help to educate people about being a responsible pet owner.

Volunteering at the roadshow was a new experience for me and a lot of fun. Besides learning more about

cats and their needs, I was happy to share with others too. In helping to distribute brochures about sterilisation I too learnt how important it is to sterilise cats and now I think need to bring my family cat for sterilisation! Other than cats, I also learnt more about other animals such as dogs and rabbits, and I also found out more about what the animal welfare organisations do.

After the roadshow I came to realise how the animals are just like us. They need the same things we do and we should never abuse animals. I hope to apply what I have learnt by helping out at any RPO activities at school, such as a pet awareness programme. I really look forward to the next roadshow!"



Stories that teach responsible pet ownership



Why and how did Tom the puppy become lost? Could it have been prevented? These pressing questions were the focus of the young participants who attended the interactive storytelling sessions at AVA's RPO Roadshows and the National Libraries in November and December 2009.

These sessions, conducted by students from Singapore Polytechnic's School of Applied Drama and Psychology in collaboration with AVA, were part of an exciting new educational initiative to engage children in an interactive journey to discover the meaning of RPO for themselves. In interacting and reasoning out the situation together with the storytellers, the young participants came to realise how keeping a pet without sufficient time or interest was not a good idea. Creating a fun origami pet and pledge at the end of the session helped to cement the message that pets are living things that require adequate and loving care for the rest of their lives.



Come visit us at Pet Central!

Responsible Pet Ownership now has a new face – an AVA microsite called Pet Central that makes learning about responsible pet ownership fresh and interesting. Whether you are considering a pet, already a pet owner or just want to pick up some pet facts, there's something for you! There are also quizzes, fun games, videos and much more!



AVA OFFICE

More about the Responsible Pet Ownership programme.



LIBRARY

A wealth of information on different types of pets, from chinchillas to terrapins.



NEWS!

The latest updates on responsible pet ownership events and happenings.



PET SHOP & SHELTER

Help to decide what kind of pet to get and where to do so.



HOME SWEET HOME

The basics of caring for a pet, being a considerate pet owner, and the repercussions of pet abandonment.



PLAYGROUND

A host of fun activities, such as games and quizzes. Features a Pet Hall of Fame where you can share photos of your pets.

Animals & Us Challenge 2010

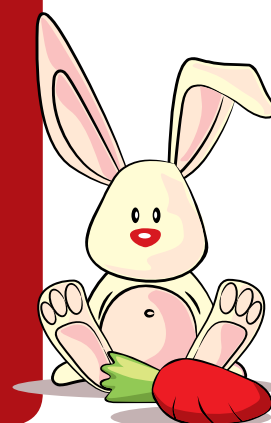
Teams from 5 secondary schools had a fun time competing against one another to clinch the top prize in the inaugural Animals & Us Challenge 2010 event organized by Applied Science School, Temasek Polytechnic and supported by AVA, which was held on 13 Mar 2010. Grouped in teams of three, the students answered 50 questions over two rounds, on topics ranging from care of animals and common animal diseases to responsible pet ownership.



Siglap secondary school who took home \$150 in book vouchers sponsored by Royal Canin. All participating schools were given 2 sets of an exclusive Encyclopaedia of Dog Small breeds published by Royal Canin.



Students were also given a tour of the Temasek Animal Facility where they were shown displays of animal skeletons and equipment used in veterinary clinics.



Have you picked up these postcards?

Our new free postcards spread this year's message of "Be a Considerate Pet Owner". If you missed the postcards at our RPO events and distribution points, you have another chance - download them at www.ava.gov.sg today!



Book your RPO talks for 2010!

Hi, I'm Adeline! It's been great visiting and meeting some of you and your students when I dropped by your schools to give talks on Responsible Pet Ownership. If you have not booked your talk for this year, I look forward to hearing from you. All talks are free of charge. Do give me a call at **6325 7542** for more information or to check out the available slots. Or you can email me at adeline_chin@ava.gov.sg.



Q: Should I get more than one pet?

A: When getting a pet, many people ponder how many to get. A common question is if getting only one will lead to a lonely unhappy pet. The answer is not the same for all pets. In fact, even amongst pets of the same type, there is no standard preference for company that applies.

Keeping more than one pet also presents new considerations. If you opt to keep more than one pet, of opposite sexes, it is important to have them sterilised to prevent unwanted litters. If the pets are not suitable for sterilisation (such as hamsters due to their small size), house male and female pets separately. Provide sufficient room for the number of pets you want to keep, as too little space can lead to stress and fighting. In addition, keeping more pets would mean an increase in pet care workload and you will need to spend more time and money. If you are unable to cope with their care, such as with cleaning up after them, you may end up with sick pets or a smelly dirty environment.

The following are some useful guidelines that you can use as a starting point to make your decision:

Dogs

The most social pet animal is generally the dog. It is in the nature of dogs to seek out the company of others. In the wild, dogs live in groups called packs. In the home, dogs crave the attention of their owners, and are happiest to be around them. It is usually all right to have only one dog if you are able to spend sufficient time with it. Otherwise, your dog may appreciate another doggy friend. If you really have little free time, you should not get a dog at all, as even if they have canine company, dogs will still require a lot of your time and resources.

Cats

Cats are not known to be social animals and in general they are quite happy to be left alone, especially since they spend a lot of time sleeping. However, this does not mean that you will not need to spend time with them. Some cats want more attention from their owners than others and actively look for their owners from time to time. One cat can do well sleeping and entertaining itself, especially if you provide toys and spend sufficient time with it. Introducing another cat to an adult cat can be tricky so if you intend to keep more than one cat from the start, two sibling kittens would be ideal.



Hamsters

Hamsters are quite notorious for fighting and indeed, of the four commonly kept species in Singapore (winter whites, campbells, syrians and roborovskis), the syrian is considered a solitary animal. This is inborn and respecting this trait, owners should keep only one syrian hamster to a cage. Otherwise, syrians can end up injuring or killing one another, especially at night when you are asleep. The winter white, campbell and roborovski, grouped together as "dwarf hamsters", are usually social and can live in groups. However, they can be rather fussy about their cages mates and will fight with some individuals whilst tolerating others.

Rabbits

Rabbits are generally social creatures and in the wild they live together in burrows. However, rabbits can also end up in bad fights with one another, especially two adult males. Keep male and female rabbits apart or have them sterilised.

Guinea pigs

Guinea pigs are rather timid creatures that require a gentle patient owner. They do appreciate another guinea pig friend as they are social, but they can also end up fighting, especially adult males. Keeping two females is usually a better option if you want more than one. A guinea pig can also do well by itself provided you spend sufficient time with it. Keep male and female guinea pigs apart or have them sterilised.

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