

CampaignUpdate

2011 The Year FOR the Rabbit

R Todd

2011 is the Chinese Year of the Rabbit, but the RWAf is hoping to make it the Year FOR the Rabbit.

As well as continuing with our successful 'A Hutch is Not Enough' campaign, we also have a series of press releases and awareness campaigns in the pipeline – all aimed at dispelling the myth that rabbits can live happily alone in a hutch. We have started with our wedding vows press release to 'bunny-back' media interest in the run-up to the royal wedding. We will keep you informed of our campaigns and progress via our website, Facebook and news blog so please keep an eye out. If you haven't joined or registered with our Facebook group then please do sign up!

We believe that the A Hutch is Not Enough campaign is vital. Every pet rabbit deserves to live in an area that permanently allows it to display its natural behaviours such as running, digging, jumping, foraging and grooming another rabbit. A hutch is a shelter and should only be used as part of a larger living area. Rabbits should be neutered and vaccinated, have the companionship of another neutered rabbit, and a good quality diet with hay or forage provided for health and emotional enrichment. We will work to improve the lives of rabbits in the UK by spreading these messages. Our aim is to raise the status of the pet rabbit to that of the cat and dog.

One of our key activities will be taking

part in Rabbit Awareness Week (RAW) in May with other major welfare organisations such as the RSPCA, PDSA, Blue Cross and the main sponsor Burgess Pet Care. Rabbit Awareness Week will be in a pet shop or vet's surgery near you very soon, and will be raising the profile of pet rabbits and their welfare needs. This year's focus is on behaviour. Rabbits have some fascinating natural behaviours but are often unable to display these due to inadequate accommodation and living alone. Please look at the RAW website for more information.

In 2011 the RWAf has set the following core objectives:

- ✳ To raise the profile of pet rabbits and their welfare needs by educating owners and potential owners and by working with the retail industry to improve standards.
- ✳ To make the public aware that rabbits are not cheap and easy children's pets and to discourage people from taking on rabbits if they are unlikely to be responsible owners.
- ✳ To continue to campaign, including our 'A Hutch is Not Enough' campaign. It is already making a difference as more retailers withdraw tiny 3ft hutches from sale and include 6ft and larger hutches in their range. Our 'Toys Aren't Us' campaign reminds potential owners that rabbits, despite their cute and fluffy appearance, are not toys that can be discarded after a few months.

✳ To increase membership of the RWAf - because more members means a bigger voice to shout with.

✳ To support the vital work of rescue shelters.

Every activity we undertake this year will be in line with our core objectives.

The RWAf will:

- Be clear and transparent with our members about our activities.
- Focus on promoting positive behaviour change among owners and retailers.
- Work with other like-minded organisations to further achieve our common goals.
- Be pragmatic. We will work with organisations with whom we may not be like minded, but where there is a necessity for a dialogue in order to impart our values and improve standards to benefit pet rabbits.
- Not compromise our beliefs
- Accept sponsorship but will never compromise our aims – to improve the lives of pet rabbits – to appease a sponsor.

Our over arching mission is to improve the lives of rabbits kept as pets in the UK. So if you love rabbits and want to help us help them - please join the RWAf.