

Campaign Update

We are very pleased with the success of the 'A Hutch is not Enough' campaign so far. We are in discussion with numerous retailers and suppliers, and making progress in many areas, even if just heightening awareness of the problems that rabbits face because of the sale of small hutches, and the lack of information provided by some retailers at the point of sale.

Argos update

In the last issue we reported that the awful 77cm hutch had been withdrawn from sale. Argos has told us that there will be no hutches in the Spring / Summer 2011 catalogue, or for the moment on-line. We are pleased that we have been able to discuss the issues with Argos.

Good news from Tesco talks

We are delighted that Tesco has committed to improving rabbit welfare and have had confirmation that Tesco will only take a hutch from their supplier if it has been approved by the RWA for sale. The RWA has worked with Tesco's supplier for months and we look forward to seeing the final range in 2011. Tesco and their supplier have also confirmed that they will include one of our A Hutch is not Enough leaflets with every hutch that is sold, so they can really help us spread the message

'A Hutch is not Enough' stickers

Please use the envelope stickers you'll find in this magazine when you post letters, or put them somewhere prominent that will attract attention and help spread awareness of the campaign and our message. You can buy more stickers from the RWA shop - £1 for 2 sheets of stickers. This will spread the message further and help to fund the campaign.



Retail Charter support growing

More retailers have signed up to our Retail Charter, and these now include a national chain of garden centres, and one of the largest retailers in the UK. This is giving us more opportunities to ensure that the rabbit owning public receive the correct information and means there is less chance of them acquiring cheap and inappropriate hutches. There is still a great deal more work to be done, so please keep supporting the campaign.

Notcutts Garden Centres have signed up to the charter, and now offer a range which includes a 6ft x 2, 6ft x 2.4ft hutch with a 6ft x 4.10 x 2ft run combo. One of

the store's staff is an RWA member, and after reading about our 'A Hutch is not Enough' campaign and the success of the Retail Charter so far, presented it to her manager who got in touch. The company has 19 stores nationwide that will be offering a good range of hutches and runs, and helping us spread our message.

On-line pet supplies retailer Animal Magic Pet Supplies have also signed up to the Charter. They are kindly offering a 15% discount to RWA members against first orders if you use the code AMRO66. They sell a range of rabbit treats and toys, as well as a 6ft rabbit hutch.

Lynn from Animal Magic, whose company is keen to do all it can to promote rabbit welfare, said: "We chose to support the 'A Hutch is not Enough' campaign because having run a small animal boarding business for several years, owning three rescue rabbits ourselves and getting involved with local rescues, we were appalled at some of the cases we came across where rabbits had been kept in inadequate accommodation. We vowed to make sure that we stocked and sold nothing less than the minimum recommended 6ft x 2ft x 2ft size of hutch for a rabbit, to ensure people didn't land up buying a 3ft or 4ft hutch simply because it was the cheaper option."

Pet Index - Glee

We were a bit disappointed to discover that the extra traffic and enormous crowds in Birmingham were there to see the Pope, and not the RWAf attending the Glee Pet Index, but never mind! We went along with our 'Retailer Charter' document which explained to retailers the problems that small hutches cause rabbits, and what we want them to do to help us improve rabbit welfare.

Included in the document was an illustration of a rabbit taking 3 hops - and covering 6ft to do so. We hope that this powerful visual message will make retailers and owners think more carefully about hutch sizes.

As a result, Sky pet products, who are distributors, have agreed to remove anything smaller than 4ft from their range, and include 5 and 6ft hutches, mainly because the public now demand them from the pet shops that they supply. The message is getting through.

Have you wondered where the small and often poor quality mass produced hutches come from? A large Chinese wholesaler was also at Glee, and there was an obvious barrier because of the language; however we did take their catalogue away and provide feedback on their range, especially with regard to the very small hutches and the lack of exercise runs. Although we did receive a reply stating they would "pay attention" to our comments its unlikely that they will stop selling them. Similarly, we tracked down the large Belgian wholesaler and asked them to stop selling the tiny hutches in their range, but to date we have not had a reply. We will keep trying, but it seems that the best way to tackle this problem is directly with retailers.

1 At rest, Dexter's body takes up to 2ft of space

2 first hop - takes him to 4ft

3 second hop - takes him to 6ft

4 third hop - takes him over 6ft

So, excluding the space he took while resting, it took Dexter, an average sized Rex rabbit, approx 6ft to take 3 hops.

And we mean proper hops, unrestricted hops, not steps or restricted hops because the hutch or run is too small.



Press releases

With the credit crunch, the threat of huge tax demands landing on doormats, and the case of poor Ginger the dog - who was caught on CCTV being abandoned by a callous owner - we felt there was a real concern that pet rabbits may also become the victims of abandonment. This was a concern shared by a member who had heard a radio interview in which a listener recounted that they had let their pet rabbit 'go' and he was fine. The RWAf issued a press release warning of the dangers of this and did a BBC radio interview explaining how people underestimate the cost and commitment

when they buy a rabbit. The press release was also published by a few blogs. If you have a blog or a website where you can publish our press releases please get in touch and we can add you to our press list.

The controversial 'John Lewis' advert (featuring a dog living outdoors alone in an inadequate kennel) also gave us the opportunity to issue a press release to remind the public that this is how the majority of pet rabbits live every day - alone and in inadequate housing. This release was also posted to our Facebook page and we asked fans to share it to their walls (apologies to those not familiar with Facebook terms), which meant that the exposure was increased. We know

that around 250 people shared the link and that over 2,000 people saw the press release as a result of Facebook alone. Thank you to everyone who helped us. We hope that this has made some people think about how they keep their lonely outdoor bunnies, and that they will look at the RWAf website and 'make it right'.

In the run up to Christmas the last press release of 2010 reminded owners to stock up for their bunnies, and gave tips for keeping rabbits warm over the cold winter months. It provoked considerable interest and led to several radio interviews.

The monthly press releases aim to raise awareness and reach owners who would not search out advice themselves.

Put the 'FUN' into fundraising

Help us to raise £30,000

The RWF has set itself a massive challenge to raise £30,000 this year to change the lives of thousands of rabbits for ever.

The funds are urgently needed so the Association can forge ahead with the 'A Hutch is not Enough' campaign and promote amongst other messages 'Two's Company' to persuade pet owners to keep rabbits in pairs. For some months we have been supplying 'A Hutch is not Enough' leaflets free of charge to retailers in a bid to reach owners at the crucial time when they are buying hutches and supplies for their rabbits. It costs £1,000 to print 15,000 leaflets.

The Association also funds veterinary residents who contribute their expertise and guidance to the RWF as well as teaching hundreds of student vets and vet nurses each year. In addition money is urgently needed to enable the Association to continue to help fund vital academic research into rabbit health problems and welfare issues. University veterinary colleges are finding their research budgets reduced and without financial assistance some vital research may not be undertaken.

But we know that in these tough economic times everyone is feeling the pinch and just writing a cheque is often not possible. So we're asking members to run a mini fund raising event this year ... and the more novel, fun and ingenious the better!

If every member raised just £10 we'd easily reach our target. But we understand that many members may be elderly, housebound or unable to take part, so if the rest of us doubled our efforts and raised £20 each we'd soon get there. It's surprisingly easy to raise £20 ... and a lot more if you come up with a

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brilliant fundraising idea that catches the imagination.

Get your bunny-owning friends, Hopper Group colleagues, and family on board to help with your mini fund raiser. Involve the children – they'll love a chance to help bunnies less fortunate than their family rabbits and you'll also be educating the next generation of responsible pet owners and rabbit ambassadors.

A mini fund raising event need only take a few hours to plan and stage, and not only is it great fun, it will give you scores of opportunities to spread the word about the campaigns. We may know why the campaigns are so important but it's a sad fact that many rabbit owners STILL believe that keeping a lonely rabbit in a cramped, cold and isolated hutch at the bottom of the garden is acceptable in the 21st Century. It isn't, and we have to change their views NOW if we want to end the suffering of so many pet rabbits.

Please, please play a part and help us reach our £30,000 target.

Here are just a few ideas to get you started ... just use your imagination and have FUN. Try to plan events that will get the public involved – even if it's just your neighbours.

- Hold a Friday Sale at work – ask colleagues to donate unwanted gifts, cosmetics, books etc during the week. Put them in a box and sell them on Friday.
- Have a Mad Hatters' Monday – charge your colleagues £1 to wear an outlandish hat to work (ask the boss first!) and award a prize to the winner.
- Ask friends to contribute to a 'Sunday Dinner' raffle – Just get a box and ask them to donate an item – A chicken, joint of meat or vegetarian main course, fresh vegetables and a delicious apple pie.
- Hold a 'guess the weight of my bunny' competition.
- Set up a 'Poo Round' – the children will love this one! Sell your hutch cleanings to keen gardeners – they'll love this nutritious boost for their compost heaps.
- If you have a glut of fruit, vegetables or flowers, sell them at the garden gate.
- Hold a 'wine and whine', or a 'knit and bitch' session with friends. Put out some nibbles and a glass of wine and ask them to make a donation.
- Get the children and the grown ups baking. Everyone loves home made cakes, biscuits and sweets. Set up a stall in the garden or sell them to your neighbours.
- Contact your local supermarket and ask if you can offer to pack customers' bags in return for a donation. (You'll find more details on the RWF website in the 'Get involved' section).
- Don't forget coffee mornings, bring and buys - just try to give them a novel twist.

Keep in touch: Send us a photo of your event. We'll try to use some in Rabbiting On or on the website. If you hold a fun event send a photo and a little news item to your local paper after the event – it'll help spread the word further.

Remember: Check out the local regulations and ensure you have the correct permissions before making public collections. Never 'shake a tin' without permission.