



AS News



OUR NAME SAYS IT ALL

Issue No. 61 Patron: Twiggy SUMMER 2004 REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 295345

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Object of Animal Samaritans

'To rescue and provide care and shelter for unwanted, abandoned, neglected or ill-treated animals and to provide new homes for such animals wherever possible.

'To assist owners of pets to meet veterinary fees where owners are unable to meet such fees'.

After what seems to have been the shortest spring we can remember, Summer has burst upon us with a feast of blossom and noisy dawn choruses to wake us up ever earlier each morning. We had a good response to our Sparrow Nesting Box appeal and we hope all of you who asked for one have now got it installed safely, with new residents for you to enjoy as they nest and bring up their young.

As we look more outwards – into our hedgerows and skies – this edition looks outwards too, with information on similar organisations we know of in other countries. In particular, we would be interested in what you consider we should do about the request from Uganda: your thoughts, please, to the Chairman.

Also, we take a closer look at those two species that seem so much in conflict: cats and birds. There is room for all on our planet, even with the growing populations we hear about in Asia and elsewhere – the trick is to maintain a fair balance and this applies equally to our beloved moggies and wild birds. Read the *BIRD TABLE* and the section on *CATS* and put the various suggestions into practice and we shall hopefully provide a better environment for both.

DDUMBA TUULE

We received the following letter recently: *"Greetings from Uganda – East Africa. This is a humble request to your institution kindly requesting financial assistance to help us set up a community veterinary clinic to enable us avert and curb the alarming death rate of companion animals caused by insensitive human beings."*

Dr Muwanguzi David, who signed the letter, attached a detailed proposal and asks for help towards a total cost (after local contributions) of \$14,315.

While we check to make sure this organisation is genuine, we ask for your comments.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

I realise I'm probably talking to nobody because you are all watching the European Cup or on holiday. Still, for those who may not like football or are just taking it easy at home, I want to mention something about the origins of our most common pets: dogs.

Did you know that all dogs are descended from the grey wolf? And that the last wolf in Britain was hunted down and killed over 700 years ago by Sir John Huntington in Cumbria? The king at the time – Edward I – had ordered in 1281 that every wolf in the kingdom was to be slaughtered and this last wolf is commemorated in a book *The Last Wolf – A Story of England in the Fourteenth Century* by Jerome Mercier.

Well, the grey wolf was first domesticated in Asia about 15,000 years ago and these first domestic dogs probably looked like today's Alaskan Malamute or Norwegian Elkhound.

Researchers have looked at the dogs' genes and found that, starting about 7000 years ago, 10 basic breeds have eventually come about. The first were either 'sight hounds' (who hunt by sight) or 'scent hounds' (hunters using their sensitive noses) or guard dogs (big and fierce). The other seven groups happened later.

The sight hounds started with the greyhound which was pictured on pots of 5000 BC. Their slim bodies, keen eyesight and bursts of speed were just what was needed for hunting and this group now includes the Saluki, Afghan wolfhound, Irish wolfhound, Borzoi and Whippet.

The scent hounds emerged in Italy about 300 AD, starting with the bloodhound. This group now includes the Dachshund, Basset hound, Foxhound and Beagle which all have a great sense of smell and endurance.

Guard dogs started with the Mastiff which was known at least 5000 years ago in Tibet. This group now includes the 'working dogs' like the Great Dane, St Bernard, Boxer, German Shepherd and the more famously aggressive Doberman and Rottweiler. These are powerful and suspicious dogs, sensitive to changes around them.

The fourth group are the 'water spaniels and retrievers', starting with the Irish water spaniel and the Newfoundland, and includes the Poodle, Labrador and Retrievers. The pointer group started with the now extinct Spanish Pointer and includes today's Dalmatian, and all the pointers. The next group (the flushing spaniels) were also founded on an extinct breed – the Spanish spaniel – and includes the Springer and Cocker spaniels. Herding dogs started with the Canaan dog and the Welsh Corgi and now includes all the Collies and Sheepdogs.

The terrier group is quite recent, starting with the Welsh terrier and includes all the terriers we know so well and the miniature Schnauzer.

So far, all these breeds are used for hunting one way or another. The last two breed groups are slightly different: the ninth group, the 'northern breeds', are used more for pulling us, starting with the Alaskan Malamute and now including the Lapphund, Husky, Keeshond, and the Eskimo.

The last group is surprisingly old. Toy and companion dogs were known in ancient Egypt, starting with the Maltese and now including the Pug, Pekingese, Shih Tzu and the toy variations of other breeds.

Now, how many breeds have I mentioned here? Count them and let me know (bunshaz@aol.com) for the next newsletter. Talk to you again in the Autumn!

Auntie Sharon



THE BIRD TABLE

The breeding season has reached its peak. Some birds have only one brood, some others (blackbirds) carry on until August. Some try again if they have failed and others are about to start (swifts, kestrels). Everywhere you go you hear babies demanding food and see parents working overtime to find those bugs, worms and grubs. The population explosion is very conspicuous but the babies that win first prize for noise are the starlings, then the blue tits. They will rid your garden of all your greenflies and maybe one or two of your cherries. From the sample we get it appears that we have a very healthy new generation this year. Unlike some years when hundreds of fledglings have been afflicted by a killer virus or *coccidiosis*, this year it seems that we have been spared an epidemic.

The garden birds that we love and need have suffered a big drop in numbers due to loss of habitat, herbicides, viruses and a huge increase of the cat population.

To help the birds you could:

1. Think twice before cutting trees down. All trees are useful; fruit trees for bugs and caterpillars, conifers for shelter and nesting, bushes for berries and protection. If you have to cut down a dangerous tree, please check for nests first but always try to do it outside the breeding season.
2. Plant bushes that will provide berries for winter.
3. Provide food and water – Remember that nuts are for squirrels and finches – birds like thrushes are soft billed and eat soft things like raisins, worms, minced beef dog food or insectivorous food from the pet shop: Mynah bird food or universal bird food.
4. If you have a cat that kills birds please keep it indoors as much as possible if you have a nest in your garden during the breeding season. Always keep it in at night when cats can do the most damage. Sparrow hawks and magpies do kill birds as well but all the surveys show that winged predators have no impact on the balance of nature; cats have – 200,000,000 birds are killed by cats every year.
5. Use animal friendly weed killer.

While we may never again see the clouding of Devon's skies by up to one million starlings gathered in a huge murmur, with so many people caring for them we can now enjoy those we are protecting.

CATS (MOSTLY)

(One of our members writes:)

In October 1988, having decided that I needed a cat in my life, I contacted AS from their ad in New Shopper. I asked for a cat, ideally ginger and white only to be told that there was only one available, and she was grey and white. I went over to a foster home in Honour Oak Park which she was sharing with the fosterers' pet dog. On the top floor of the house she sat on the settee. She peered around the settee, gave a look as if to say, "Yes; what do you want?" followed by "Oh well, you'll do". I had been advised that she was about 8 months old although the vet established that she was closer to a year (so she was born around the time of the great storm). I was told by her fosterers that she had already had one litter and when she was pregnant again she was handed by her owners to a neighbour saying that they "Never wanted to see her again".

She had such a pretty face and the only name I could think of was Cleo – however, as no name really seemed appropriate for such an individual looking cat she became HG (as my surname is Wells). AS had advised me to introduce her to one room at a time when I got her home and, as I let her out of the pet carrier, she looked up the stairs, ran up and investigated all the rooms, then she came downstairs and did the same there - then she looked at me as if to say "Ok, I'll stay. You can feed me now".

In the early days she would try and follow me along the road whenever I left the house in fear of getting left behind but she soon settled in and became very much mistress of the house. I have many special memories of her as my great friend and companion, not least of all when David Attenborough was on TV impersonating birds of paradise - she started watching the TV, then jumped up onto the unit trying to get into the TV where she thought that real birds were (Oh for a video camera!).

HG and I spent fifteen and a half magical years together until she had heart failure and died on 4 March. She was one of the greatest and totally irreplaceable.

Now the time has come to move on and, on 1 May, I adopted Henry and Tabatha, a pair of tabbies. They are a brother and sister aged 4 and 5, they have been well cared for by the elderly owner who died recently. They are so very different in nature and I am sure we will become good friends. They are settling in though still grieving for their late owner and waiting to go out in the garden - three weeks is a long time for any cat!



Here is a picture of HG as I will always remember her.

Without Animal Samaritans neither of these introductions would have been possible and my life certainly would not have been so rich.

Thank you, AS: your name certainly "says it all"!

From the newspapers

Great survivor(s)

You would hardly say that life for Felix has been one long purr. He has already used up five of his hoped-for nine lives in his 13 years on earth.

His first brush with death was before he lived with his present owner. He had been left behind when his then owners moved house and promptly got himself locked into a neighbour's shed for two days.

Next, he climbed a roofer's ladder at another neighbour's house and fell off just as other ladders were being put in place to rescue him.

Later, he jumped down on to some broken glass on yet another neighbour's window sill after a party and nearly bled to death.

But his greatest claim to fame came when he was shot by poachers when he was out in the fields. He had 36 pellets in his body but he still managed to get home.

At the **Cats Protection** charity awards in the Savoy Hotel in London he won the title of Ultimate Survivor. However, he was nearly second to another great survivor – Houston, a squint-eyed moggie from Texas.

Houston strayed into a 40ft container of oilfield components in – where else? – Houston in Texas and she was locked in there for a nightmare journey that ended in Aberdeen in Scotland – *six weeks later!*

It seems she survived by drinking the condensed water on the container's steel sides. After emergency treatment (including infusions of artificial blood at £200 a bag) and six months in quarantine, she was adopted by a worker at the Aberdeen oil terminal and now delights her new owner by bringing all sorts of live animals into her home, only to see them liberated!

Houston was, of course, awarded the title of Long Distance Traveller of the Year.

London ducks really do have a Cockney accent!

Phonetics experts have studied some of our duck population and found that they, like us, develop regional accents, depending on where they live.

Ducks born 'within the sound of Bow Bells' have a distinctive gritty, loud quack (that can be heard over the traffic din) while those in Cornwall have a much softer, relaxed quack.

Not only were the London ducks louder but they were also more excitable when compared to their chilled-out Cornish cousins.

Having come to this astonishing conclusion from this one comparison, the experts are now looking at the quacks of Geordie, Scouse and Irish ducks to see if this holds true elsewhere.

(This item appeared in the Daily Mail on 4 June – not 1 April ...Editor's note)

VET'S CORNER - Special care for your dogs in summer

Summer is a time when dogs in particular encounter many extra hazards and risks to their health. There are too many to discuss all of them in detail in one article so we have picked two perennial favourites this time.

Grass lawns: most dog owners are aware of the risks posed by grass seeds and darts – they work their way into ears, eyes, between toes into feet and penetrate right through the skin. Undetected they commonly result in the need for general anaesthetics and surgery to locate and remove them.

Long-haired dogs are most at risk but all can suffer. You can reduce the risk considerably by performing a good examination of your pet after walks in grassy areas – lift the earflaps and look inside the opening and examine between the toes and under the paws. When the seeds are first picked up you can usually spot them but they will soon disappear as they start to migrate deeper into ears and through the skin.

Fleas: everyone knows about fleas but not everyone understands what a problem they can be and how to tackle them effectively. Two important facts to remember is that the flea population gradually increases through the summer and peaks in the late autumn and also that female fleas lay up to 40 eggs every day. The eggs are tiny and usually unseen and tend to drop off your pet into the carpets of your house where they hatch and produce more fleas. Given the right conditions and lack of observation you can develop a massive flea infestation if you are very unlucky! Fleas are the commonest cause of skin allergies in dogs and cause untold misery even in tiny numbers.

It is essential to use a high quality flea treatment throughout the summer and autumn to keep your pet and your house happy.

As a footnote on fleas – they also carry **tapeworm** eggs, so if your pet has fleas it probably also has tapeworms, so don't forget to worm your dogs (and cats) every 3 months.

Philip Parker MRCVS – Sidcup Veterinary Centre

ANIMAL RESCUING AROUND THE WORLD

Thanks to Ted Lane, we have received a copy of the Autumn 2004 Newsletter of the **Australian Animal Protection Society**. They do much the same work as AnSam and can be contacted on: www.aaps.org.au. (In case you think the date is wrong, remember that Australians have their seasons opposite to us!)

We have also received the April 2004 copy of **Animal People**, an American magazine dedicated to our animal friends with details of all sorts of animal organisations in USA and Canada. In our next issue we will note some of the stories and contacts they have.

Further south, in **El Salvador**, you will be glad to know that even the poorer countries have time to help our animal friends. CAM (Contaminación Ambiental Municipal) take care of all sorts of animals in their parks and we will print a story in our next issue.

Lastly, please note the **Ugandan** appeal on the front page and send us your comments.

Neutering Offer

Neutering isn't cruel; it is for the animals' benefit. We need to control their numbers which are much too high. Those of you who have un-neutered pets will know how much of a problem they can be when on heat or have unplanned litters.

If you have a cat, dog or rabbit which you think should be neutered but are worried about the cost, we are still offering ONE HUNDRED MEMBERS **FREE NEUTERING**.


This offer is limited to one per household. If you wish to apply, please write to us at our PO Box number or telephone us.

Microchipping Offer

Our pets can sometimes stray
Worse still, they can be stolen.

Why not have your pet microchipped?

We offer a discount service: ring Sarah at

 020 8304 1933

And, to benefit our animals, we are offering **FREE MICROCHIPPING** on a one per household basis to MEMBERS who apply.

(for those in need)

A Spiritual Healer

for Pets


Betty Brewer

 **020 8850 5785**

PET BEREAVEMENT

We all encounter tragedy and personal loss at one time or another in our lives. When we are overcome, confused or defeated about ourselves or someone else, we can always contact The Samaritans who will help us through those dark days.

If you are saddened and dejected at losing a beloved pet, you will find a sympathetic ear, understanding and support at our pet bereavement service.

Just call Chris Bishop at  020 8303 1859

How to contact us



Post

Animal Samaritans
PO Box 154
Bexleyheath
DA16 2WS

for all communications



Our Website

www.animalsamaritans.org.uk

is regularly updated

e-mail to: info@animalsamaritans.org.uk

and send us an e-mail with your opinions; we hope to link as many of our Members as possible through the website



Telephone

Our dedicated telephone also has an answer phone: 020 8303 1859

please note: **THE INTERNATIONAL CODE**

FOR AFTER DEATH SERVICES FOR COMPANION ANIMALS

The Association of Private Pet Cemeteries & Crematoria has developed this code to ensure that pet owners clearly understand the services to which they agree for the after death care of their pets. The code encompasses all after death services that may be available. The Association is only concerned with standards for those described as cremation or burial. Where a service is described as cremation or burial it will encompass three key points:

- 1) the sympathetic handling of the pet at all times;
- 2) the burial or cremation carried out according to the legal requirements of the country; and
- 3) the committal of the body or the ashes to a particular area intended for that purpose or, in the case of cremation, the return of the ashes to the owner.

MEMBERS – Please Note ! We have completed verifying our membership records but:

1. Please check the details (name and address) we note on your subscription renewal letter.
2. Please check the new Membership Cards enclosed for all recently renewed members.

Application Form for NEW Members

SURNAME: Miss/Mrs/Ms/Mr

First Name:

Address:

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Postcode:

E-mail address:

- Adult £8.00 annual subscription
- Young person (under 18) £5.00 annual subscription
- Senior Citizen/Unemployed £5.00 annual subscription

I enclose: Subscription £..... Donation £..... TOTAL £

Cheque/Postal Order made payable to "ANIMAL SAMARITANS".

Please return to: **Animal Samaritans, PO Box 154, Bexleyheath DA16 2WS**

Please allow 28 days for us to register your new membership - Thank you!