



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PLEASE DON'T BUY A BUNNY!

Animal welfare groups urge members of the public not to buy pet rabbits as the Year of the Rabbit approaches.

Singapore, 7 December 2010 – The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and the House Rabbit Society Singapore (HRSS) are urging the public not to buy pet rabbits on impulse next year, the Lunar Year of the Rabbit.

This joint effort aims to debunk misconceptions that people have about rabbits, especially in the year 2011, as people might think that having a rabbit in the house could be auspicious. Combined with the assumption that rabbits are low-maintenance, people may purchase rabbits on impulse or as gifts, which could lead to neglect or abandonment of these gentle creatures.

In Singapore, hundreds of rabbits are abandoned annually, whether to shelters or released outdoors, which ultimately could lead to their death, as they are unable to care for themselves in the wild. Contrary to popular belief, rabbits are not low-maintenance pets, and require no less work than owning a cat or dog (e.g. litter trays need to be cleaned daily).

The HRSS, a volunteer-based, non-profit organisation dedicated to rabbit welfare and awareness, together with the SPCA, strongly urges the public not to purchase a rabbit on impulse or as a gift, especially for children, unless the parents are willing to make a 10-year commitment to the animal, i.e. for the duration of the rabbit's life.

Children, especially, do not realise that rabbits are fragile, ground-loving creatures that will struggle when held and are easily hurt when dropped. Also, it is near impossible for a child to commit to a rabbit for 10 years. All too often, the child loses interest, and the rabbit ends up unwanted.

"Many pets in Singapore suffer unnecessarily because of ignorance on the part of their owners," commented HRSS President Jacelyn Heng. "Many people buy pets on impulse and do not fully understand the responsibilities of keeping an animal at home. The problem is particularly acute for rabbits because people wrongly assume that they are low-maintenance starter pets for children."

Jacelyn added, "Many pet shops in Singapore are also not well informed about the care needed for a pet rabbit and often provide wrong or false information to unknowing first-time owners."

Deirdre Moss, Executive Director of the SPCA, adds "Following the last Year of the Rabbit in 1999, 625 abandoned pet rabbits were taken in by the SPCA – this represented a 116 per cent increase from the year before. We certainly hope that this coming Lunar Year of the Rabbit will not see a repeat of people buying them on a whim, to bring luck. As it is, we have seen too many abandoned and neglected rabbits in the past two years, totalling 1,200.

The HRSS recommends adopting a rabbit from the SPCA or the HRSS instead of buying from a shop, as there are simply too many healthy and sweet-natured rabbits in need of a good home. For those who are unsure about the commitment that they are able to offer, perhaps a soft toy would do just as well for this Lunar New Year's celebrations.

Let's make this Year of the Rabbit a truly enjoyable time for our rabbits.

Points to note about owning a rabbit:

- Housing: Bunnies need to be kept indoors, preferably with free roam of the house or in a roomy playpen.
- Diet: Bunnies need fresh water, unlimited fresh green grass-hay, 3-4 types of fresh green leafy vegetables, and a small serving of plain good-quality rabbit pellets each day.
- Litter tray: Rabbits, once spayed or neutered, will readily use a litter tray that is placed in one corner of their living area; the rabbit's running space should contain at least one additional litter tray. Use dust-free litter – not the clumping kind – and do not use softwood shavings.
- Playtime: Rabbits need plenty of exercise and should be allowed considerable out-of-cage running time in a rabbit-proofed area of the home daily.
- Health: Like dogs and cats, rabbits should be sterilised to lower the risk of uterine cancer in females and to stop males from spraying.

- Grooming: Rabbits shed their coat 3-4 times per year. It is important that no one in the family is allergic to fur, and the owner must be willing to spend time grooming their rabbit on a regular basis.

Note to editors:



About the House Rabbit Society of Singapore (HRSS)

The HRSS is an all-volunteer, non-profit organisation dedicated to rabbit welfare and awareness. The HRSS runs a fostering programme to rescue and re-home abandoned rabbits and participates in numerous public events to educate the general public about rabbit care and behaviour. For more information, visit <http://www.hrss.net>



About the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) is the first registered animal welfare charity in Singapore. The two main objectives of the SPCA are to promote kindness to animals and to prevent cruelty to animals. Relying mainly on donations from the public and fundraising, the Society provides various animal welfare services to the community including a 24-hour emergency service, cruelty investigation, a sterilisation voucher programme for strays as well as running an animal shelter for abused and abandoned pets and strays. For more information, visit <http://www.sPCA.org.sg>