GREATER MANCHESTER AND CHESHIRE ANIMAL RESCUES JOIN CAMPAIGN FOR A BETTER LIFE FOR RABBITS & RODENTS

Monday 15 February, 2021

One Voice for Animals UK (OVFA UK), launched in April 2020 to support the UK's small rescue centres which are struggling due to the Covid crisis, is campaigning during the first half of 2021 to improve the welfare of domestic rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters and other rodents.

As these pets aren't foremost in the minds of the public, there is far less awareness of the welfare issues they face.

The two key welfare issues for this type of pet are:

- Lack of awareness around proper care; diet, health, accommodation, companionship and enrichment needs; and
- Unlicensed breeders selling through the internet. They are not subject to any regulations, legislation or welfare checks, and they provide no care advice to their customers.

Val Green, founder of OVFA UK, said:

"Over 70 rescues in our directory take in rabbits and rodents; six of them are in the Greater Manchester/Cheshire area.. They are deeply concerned about these small mammals' welfare. Animals are bred in awful conditions, left cold and lonely in tiny cages, and even abandoned. These beautiful animals have the same needs as our beloved cats and dogs, but because they don't make as much noise, they literally suffer in silence".

Rabbits are the third most popular pet in the UK but are the most neglected. As well as being left in too-small hutches without room to stretch or mental and physical stimulation, thousands of rabbits end up in rescue centres every month.

OVFA UK member, Special Needs Older Rabbits Sanctuary (SNORS) in Warrington, has come to the aid of two such rabbits who were dumped like rubbish on a private driveway near Stoke-on-Trent. The pair were rescued by the RSPCA but needed a home that could meet their medical needs. As SNORS was founded to offer rescue rabbits with complex health needs a specialist permanent home in order to relieve the space and financial burden of rescues, the pair are now happily settled there.

SNORS has noticed an increase during the past few years in the number of times they are asked to help rescues who are struggling to cope with the quantity of rabbits in need of rehoming.

A spokesperson for SNORS said:

"Rabbits are as big a commitment as cats and dogs. They need neutering and annual vaccinations, care and attention, and to live with another rabbit for company. They are wonderful pets, but they need your time, about £16,000 of your money, and your devotion for their whole life - which can be over ten years."

OVFA UK member, Bacchus Residents Rescue in East Cheshire was shocked by the 67% increase in the number of rabbits, rodents and exotic animals they dealt with in 2020 (going from 60 in 2019 to 100 in 2020). And there was a whopping 767% increase in the number of strays, rising from just 3 in 2019 to 26 in 2020.

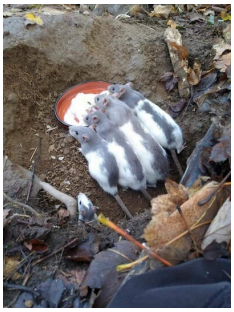
In addition, the condition of some of last year's animals was amongst the worst they had ever seen, with several not surviving more than a couple of months due to chronic neglect and untreated health issues.

The rescue, along with fellow OVFA UK member, Tiny Paws MCR in Greater Manchester, has been involved in an epic rescue and rehoming effort for hundreds of rats. A small group is believed to have been dumped in woodland in Derbyshire last March. Local rescues learned of it in autumn and managed to catch 80 so far, some of whom were already pregnant again and they gave birth to another 121 babies.

Jodie-Leigh Bacchus, Trustee, said:

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“This was a prime example as to why people should contact reputable rescues instead of dumping their pets. If the problem had been dealt with at the root, it wouldn't have escalated into trying to find homes for hundreds of rats. We acknowledge times have been challenging, with not a single soul unaffected by the Covid pandemic, but we urge people to seek help from rescues if they are unable to care for their pets. Us rescues really do want to help.”

If anyone is considering a rabbit or rodent for a pet, OVFA UK urges the public to:

1. Use a reputable source to understand your potential pet’s needs. We have guidance at www.helpanimals.co.uk/campaigns

2. Adopt, don’t shop.
You can use our directory at www.helpanimals.co.uk to find a rescue near you (they all vaccinate and neuter rabbits before re-homing).

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