World-record Breaking First for British Hen Charity

Monday 25 January, 2016

It was a special day for one clucky, lucky hen on 23rd January 2016 because she set a world record for hen welfare charity, the British Hen Welfare Trust.

'Dee', so-called because 'D' represents 500 in roman numerals, became the half a millionth hen to be saved from slaughter and re-homed as a family pet by the popular national charity, first started in 2005.

The feathered (world) first was taken from a commercial egg farm in the West Midlands and adopted by the Elliott family from Rugby, who will now ensure that Dee is given a suitably egg-ceptional free range retirement as a result of her record-breaking status.

Julie Elliott, and her daughter Rosie (aged 5) remarked that re-homing the charity's 500,000th hen would be a day they would always remember. Julie told us: “All I could think was this is like something out of one of Rosie's storybooks and I can't believe this is happening to us! Thank you to the British Hen Welfare Trust from the bottom of our hearts, thank you, for choosing us to be Dee's forever family. She is beautiful and such a sweet girl, we had completely fallen in love with her long before we even got her home."

The charity was founded by Jane Howorth who wanted to raise the profile of laying hens that were kept in battery cages, whilst encouraging support for the British egg industry. Her pioneering vision to win over the hearts and minds of the public through the adoption scheme recently led to the 55 year old receiving an MBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours List.

Jane told us: “I have championed the battery hen since I was 17, they are the under-valued underdogs of the domesticated animal world in my view. Last year the British Hen Welfare Trust celebrated its 10th birthday, and was awarded Charity of the Year by the British Veterinary Nursing Association. And already this year I am absolutely thrilled to have been recognised for the work that the charity does. Now we have just reached another milestone in re-homing our half a millionth hen, Dee! I'm incredibly grateful to all the people that have helped to make it happen, especially our wonderful volunteers and of course the charity's supporters who have adopted our gorgeous feathered friends over the years. The concept of hens as pets is now firmly on the map."

The British Hen Welfare Trust not only re-homes hens at the end of their commercial life, but educates the public about laying hen welfare. The charity has also been instrumental in influencing food manufacturers such as Hellmann's who switched to use of only free range eggs in its product range, and believes its re-homing initiative has helped to indirectly build a bridge between welfare and commerce.

Patron **Jamie Oliver** commented on the achievement: “The British Hen Welfare Trust has always supported the British egg industry whilst carrying out their work. I like their positive campaign style and introducing kids to the joys of hen keeping provides a valuable lesson in where our food comes from. Good on 'em and congratulations!"

As well as Jamie Oliver, the charity has Amanda Holden and Jimmy Doherty amongst its patrons, so it's not hard to see why the organisation has flourished although Jane would see it in more simplistic terms: “Commercial laying hens have been out of sight and out of mind for decades, but now over half a million have been given the chance to enjoy lazing in the sunshine, rootling for bugs and slugs, and interacting with people. The hens themselves are the best advocates for their cause; to adopt some hens is life-enriching … and what other pet gives something in return for hospitality in the form of delicious eggs?!"

To find out more about re-homing hens or to support the work of the British Hen Welfare Trust please email info@bhwt.org.uk log on to www.bhwt.org.uk or tel: 01884 860084

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