



Gloucestershire Animal Welfare Association & Cheltenham Animal Shelter

# SUMMER 2024

## ANIMAL EXPERIENCE DAYS NEWSLETTER

### What we got up to!

During the summer holidays our animal care assistants for the day helped us clean kennels and small animal pens, completed an enrichment making activity, and had exclusive animal interactions with some of our rescue animals!

For our craft activity for the summer, we made pet “ice cream” cones. The children and young people picked to make a cone for a dog, cat, or rabbit/guinea pig, which they could take home for their pet or gift to a shelter resident.

The dog “ice cream” had dog treat “scoops” and a Bonio “flake.” Our cat “ice cream” was a cat cornetto with cat treats at the bottom and pom-poms for the “ice-cream!” Lastly, the rabbit and guinea pigs had screwball ice cream, which was made with a hay ball made of loo roll tubes and topped with a hay and herb “ice cream.”



### Hands-off Interactions

This holiday we focused on ‘Hands-off’ play. Hands-off play allows us to spend time with our pets without stroking them constantly. It is also a useful tool to both entertain our pets and interact with them when the weather is hot. Here at the shelter, we also find this is a great way for some of our residents to build their confidence, both around humans and their new environment.

For our dog meet, the children took on board what they had learnt to set up scent games and scavenger hunts for the rescue dogs. Master, a 4-year-old retired racing greyhound, really enjoyed meeting all the children. Master loves his food so really appreciated the games and extra respite from his kennel.



To help provide our cats with mental stimulation and human companionship during the hot weather, the children and young people played with cat wands/ fishing rods with our cats.



### \*NEW\* Sessions for Young Adults!

One of our summer sessions was offered exclusively for young people aged 12-16. This was a trial session, which we are keen to continue. During the sessions the young people helped clean our small animal pens, prepared enrichment items for our rescue dogs, including biscuits and Kongs, and had animal interactions.

During the dog meet the young people learnt about positive reinforcement, which is where we use a reward based system by using toys, treats, or praise to motivate our dogs to learn.

With our rescue dog Kenai we put this into practise by investigating what would motivate him as a reward for his training. We know that Kenai loves food, so the young people were set the challenge of finding out what his favourite food is by the ‘choose it game.’ This involved hiding treats in a closed fist, and our dog would sniff out and go to the hand of the treat they wanted. For this experiment we used cheese, sausages, ham and dog treats. The results of our finding were that Kenai prefers dog treats, which we then used for them to practice basic commands.

For our rabbit interaction the children met shelter resident Perry in small groups where we had an informal chat about rabbit handling, nutrition, and enrichment! Perry particularly loved the sessions and enjoyed the offerings of coriander!





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### Hands-off Interactions

Hands-off interactions and play refer to ways we can spend time with our pets without stroking or touching them.

There are many reasons pets may not want to be touched, like us, our pets are individuals with their own personalities, they may be poorly or in pain, or have had negative past experiences in their lives, and our pets need breaks and simply do not want to be stroked all the time.

Hands-off interactions and play are a safe way for us to interact with our pets. Furthermore, they provide an opportunity to bond and build a positive relationship, whilst both parties are having a fun, enjoyable experience.

### Hands-off Interactions—Dogs

There are many ways we can interact with our dogs whilst giving them space. This can include:

- Hide and seek—hiding your dog's favourite treat or toy in the garden for them to find.
- Games of fetch or tug toy games
- A nice walk
- Trick training
- Setting up enrichment items and scent games such as, snufflemats, treat balls and puzzles, Kongs, and even items around the home such as egg boxes!
- A toy box—as a family activity you can make or get your dog a toy box and fill it with your dog's favourite toys. For younger children it is a great way for them to get involved designing a box, and picking what toys they would like to go in there—this idea could be used for cats as well.



### Hands-off Interactions—Cats

Play is a great way for hands-off interactions with your cats. By playing with our cats we are helping our cats exercise, bonding with them, providing mental stimulation, and allowing them to display their natural behaviours.

Play can also be beneficial for cats who need their confidence building, as well as those who have playful personalities.

Interactive play is a fantastic hands-off game, such as, a cat wand or 'fishing rod,' which is a toy attached to a piece of string on a stick. These toys encourage our cats to stalk, chase, and pounce. We always find that both children and cats enjoy this game on Animal Days!

Another great idea is setting up enrichment and scent games for our cats. Generally, we think of these games for our canine friends, however, cats are natural hunters and are used to seeking out their food. Enrichment items are another fun interactive game, which also allows our cats to display their natural behaviours. Enrichment items include treat balls and puzzles, toys, Kongs, as well as making your own toys and enrichment at home.



### Hands-off Interactions—Rabbits

Here at CAS we are keen to promote correct husbandry for rabbits. Like all other pets rabbits are intelligent animals with their own personalities. As rabbits are prey animals, they like to be able to move around as they please and most do not like being picked up.

Hands-off activities are a great way for us to interact with our rabbits, who are typically social animals, as well as mentally stimulate them. Like our other pets rabbits need to be provided with things to do. Ideas for hands-off interactions with rabbits include:



- Enrichment items—snufflemats, treat balls, puzzles, toys, and tunnels
- Toy toss—some rabbits love to toss items, if this is the case you can provide them with a safe, lightweight toy.
- Making an obstacle course for your rabbit such as, hurdles! This can be made out of both toilet and kitchen roll tubes. Look online for inspiration!



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### Destruction Boxes

Destruction boxes are a great enrichment item that can be easily made and adapted for any pet. As a fun, family activity why not try making these for your pets at home!

 <p><b>Dog Destruction Box</b></p>	<p>1 You will need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dog treats or kibble</li> <li>Toilet roll</li> <li>Newspaper</li> <li>Ballpoint pen</li> </ul>	<p>2</p> <p>Using a ballpoint pen, carefully make some holes in your toilet tube. Please watch your fingers! Push small dog treats through the hole.</p>	 <p><b>Cat Destruction Box</b></p>	<p>1 You will need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cats treats or kibble</li> <li>An empty cat pouch box</li> <li>Toilet rolls</li> <li>Optional: Colouring pens</li> </ul>	<p>2</p> <p>Optional: Using your colouring pens draw a design of your choice on your toilet roll tube.</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Close one of the ends of the toilet roll by squeezing them together.</p> <p>Then fold over the two corners.</p> <p>Next, fold over the end to keep it closed.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Optional: Fill the middle of your toilet roll with dog treats or kibble.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Fill your cardboard box with newspaper, your loo rolls, and dog treats or kibble.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Close one end of the tube by squeezing the toilet roll together and folding the corners in</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Put cat treats or kibble inside your toilet roll tube.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Put your prepared tubes into your cardboard box.</p>
<p>6</p> <p>You can add to your box by using a ballpoint pen to make holes on the outside, and then poke treats through the holes. You may need an adult's help, and please watch your fingers!</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Your destruction box is ready for your dog to enjoy.</p>		<p>6</p> <p>Next, scatter some kibble or treats into the box.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Your box is ready to give to your cat!</p>	

### Upcoming Events

Next Animal Experience Sessions -October Half-term 28th - 31st October

Sophie Hughs Art Workshop – October half-term bookings announced on <https://bookwhen.com/sophiehughesart>

21st September - Fun Dog Show at Charlton Kings Autumn Fayre

8th September Frampton Country Fair

27th-29th September - Malvern Autumn Show

5th October - Tabletop Sale at Cheltenham Animal Shelter

26th October - Halloween Group Dog Walk at Pittville Park

28th November - Cheltenham Animal Shelter's Festive Fayre

14th December - Festive Group Dog Walk at Pittville Park

For more information on our upcoming events please visit the events calendar on our website

<https://gawa.org.uk/events-calendar/>

 <p><b>Dig Boxes</b></p>	<p>1 You will need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cardboard box</li> <li>Rabbit friendly herbs and leafy greens</li> <li>Hay</li> </ul>	<p>2</p> <p>Fill your cardboard box with fresh hay.</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Place your herbs and leafy greens in your box.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Mix your herbs and greens amongst the hay. This will encourage your rabbit to dig and search for the treats.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Place your dig boxes in your rabbit's pen and watch them enjoy their tasty treat!</p>
<p>6</p> <p>This enrichment item is also suitable for Guinea pigs, and can be adapted to suit other small animals!</p>		