Spring/Summer 2025

News from Cheltenham Animal Shelter

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A very warm welcome to our latest Newsletter

Dear Friends,

In this edition, you'll find heartwarming stories of the animals you've supported, along with features containing helpful tips and advice on how to best care for your pet.

Small animal welfare is a significant concern in the UK, and there is a lack of understanding that many types of small animal pets benefit from companionship. Did you know that guinea pigs, for example, are social creatures who thrive when kept in pairs or groups? Keeping them alone can lead to loneliness and stress. Check out our short feature, **'Buddy up: companionship for small animals'** to find out what is best for your furry friend.

Dog safety continues to be a big issue so please share our tips on handling dogs, with your dog-loving friends and family. Plus, we're thrilled to share the joys of adopting older cats, with a special update on Felix, one of our senior residents who recently found his forever home.

As we move into spring, we're taking on an important project to upgrade the roofs of our dog kennel blocks. The current dog kennel roofs are leaking which can cause bedding to become damp during rainy weather. While our dedicated staff work hard to keep the dogs warm and dry, the new roofs will provide better insulation and soundproofing, making the kennels more comfortable for the dogs year-round and reduce stress from other dogs barking.

This project is a significant expense, but thanks to a generous grant from Pets Foundation, we're able to move forward – we can't thank them enough!

Thank you for your support, it means the world to us. Together we are making a real difference.

Warm regards,

Peter Newcombe, General Manager

Cats corner

Jasper

Ten-year-old Jasper came to the Shelter after his owner sadly passed away, with no other family members able to care for him.

He's a friendly boy, who loves playing with his toys – especially his cherished cuddly mouse, which he loves to sneak up on whenever he gets the chance!

Jasper has a heart murmur, as well as early signs of HCM (Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy) and Spondylosis of the spine, but neither condition currently requires medication, and in fact, we are pleased to announce that Jasper has recently found a new home.

Rory

Six-year-old Rory is a sweet, affectionate chap seeking his forever home.

With his friendly and loving nature, he will make a great companion. Having struggled with some anxieties and toileting issues in his past home, dear Rory now needs a fresh start in a calm, adult-only and pet free environment.

If you're looking for a loyal, loving feline friend and have a quiet home to offer, Rory could be your perfect pal!

Fliss

Pretty three-year-old Fliss, came to the Shelter following the sad loss of her owner.

She was a little nervous and shy on her arrival, but it soon became clear to our team that Fliss was pregnant. Her carers worked hard to reassure her, and to make her feel safe, warm and comfortable in her cosy pen.

Fliss has since given birth to four beautiful kittens and has been a truly brilliant mum. She now deserves to find a peaceful, safe and happy home of her own.

These cats may have been adopted by the time you receive your newsletter, but there are plenty more who need homes.

Think again!
The considerations and joy of adopting a senior cat

Adopting an older cat is an incredibly rewarding experience. Senior cats often bring a sense of peace to a home, being a calm, loving companion who's ready to curl up beside you, and with their established personalities, it's easier to find a cat whose temperament matches your lifestyle.

Older cats tend to be less demanding than younger cats, making them perfect companions for first-time pet owners. They are usually litter-trained and have established routines, which can make the transition to a new home smoother. However, adopting an older cat comes with some considerations that you should be prepared for.

Medical needs: they are more likely to develop age-related conditions, such as arthritis, kidney disease, dental issues, and hyperthyroidism. Monitor their health and visit a vet when necessary.

Diet: consider a senior-specific food with lower fat content to help prevent obesity in less active cats, or omega-3 fatty acids, glucosamine, or chondroitin for joint health. Cats with kidney disease may require formulated food to support their kidneys.

Dental health: older cats often suffer from dental disease, so providing kibble or specially formulated food may help reduce tartar buildup. Regular teeth brushing, if your cat tolerates it, is also beneficial.

ADJUSTMENTS TO YOUR HOME CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

Accessible litter tray: cats with arthritis may struggle with high-sided litter boxes. A low-entry tray is much easier for them to use.

Resting areas: provide soft, supportive bedding in quiet, accessible spots where your cat can rest without needing to jump or climb.

Stair accessibility: if your home has stairs, you may wish to consider adding ramps to make it easier for your cat to get around.

KEEP A CHECK ON THESE COMMON SIGNS IN SENIOR CATS

Changes in appetite or thirst: increased thirst or a change in appetite could be signs of a developing condition.

Weight changes: weight loss or gain could point to thyroid issues, diabetes, or other medical conditions.

Mobility issues: difficulty jumping, or stiffness is often due to arthritis.

Behavioural changes: Lethargy, excessive grooming or even purring can be signs of anxiety or may signal discomfort.

Felix is home once more

You might recall Felix, our oldest resident, who was featured in our last newsletter? We're thrilled to share that Felix, soon to turn 18 years old, is now bringing joy to his new owner Beth, who is one of our care assistants.

The day Felix arrived at Beth's home, his confident personality shone through. He explored his new space, climbed on the TV unit, and found a comfy spot on the bed – without even stopping to eat. Felix had quickly made himself at home!

Now, Felix spends his days lounging in his favourite spots – either on the bed or in the armchair - prompting Beth to sit on the floor, but she wouldn't have it any other way. As this older boy doesn't groom himself much anymore, he enjoys Beth gently grooming him whilst they are relaxing.

Despite being arthritic and needing a little medication for pain, Felix is still active, especially in the evenings when he enjoys playing with string toys and zooming around. He is completely deaf, which may be a reason he meows so loudly, but this isn't a problem as his meow softens when he knows that Beth has heard him, especially when he wants some food. Felix has only three teeth, so Beth feeds him soft pate food, but that doesn't stop him from also enjoying a special kibble that supports his liver.

Beth has found Felix to be a loving companion. As someone who struggles with her mental health, she's noticed the profound impact he has had on her life. He's a source of comfort and joy, greeting her at the door and providing companionship.

Beth says, "Felix has made such a massive difference to my life. He's not just a pet; he's my true friend. If you're considering adopting a cat, I highly recommend an older one. They give so much love."

To see the cats looking for their forever home, visit www.gawa.org.uk/adopt-a-pet

Small furries

Dog and Duck

One-year-old guinea pigs, Dog and Duck, are sweet, food-loving boys who enjoy cuddling up together in their favourite hides.

Although a little nervous, they are gradually growing more confident around their carers and now venture out to say hello and eat when their human pals are nearby.

These shy boys need a patient, understanding owner who is willing to invest time in building their trust. Due to their timid nature, they'd thrive in a home with older children or adults, where they can enjoy a calm, gentle environment to help them to feel safe and comfortable.

Bobby

One-year-old Bobby is an Old-English spotted bunny. He was hand-reared as a baby in his previous home and loves the company of his human friends.

Understandably Bobby was very nervous when he arrived at the Shelter, but now he is growing in confidence. He is a cheerful little chap, who is always happy to accept a cosy cuddle or tasty treat when offered!

Always curious, Bobby shows interest in his neighbouring rabbits and will need a large enclosure to call home with a neutered female for company.

Ducky

Ducky, a four-year-old canary, came into our care after sadly being abandoned.

She is a beautiful and endearing little girl, with a cheerful personality that will bring joy to any home.

Ducky adores her seeds, enjoys bathing, and is happiest when hopping between perches or relaxing on her favourite ladder toy.

You'll often hear her singing joyfully as she observes her surroundings. Ducky is seeking a loving home, with a spacious cage or aviary where she can fly, stretch her wings, and explore.

These small pets may have been adopted by the time you receive your newsletter, but there are plenty more who need homes.

Buddy up: companionship for small animals

Companionship is essential for many of our small pets. Living without a friend can cause them to become lonely or stressed, and their wellbeing may suffer.

Bunnies: better together

Rabbits are naturally social creatures, and in the wild, they live in groups for safety. It's important for rabbits to have at least one companion so they feel secure. Although each rabbit is unique, the most ideal pairings are usually two neutered females or a neutered male and female.

Guinea pigs: pairing up

Like rabbits, guinea pigs thrive in groups. In the wild, they live in large herds, so they need at least one companion to feel content. While some pet owners think rabbits and guinea pigs may be housed together, it's not advised as they have different diets, don't communicate well, and the guinea pig may end up being bullied.

Chinchillas & Degus

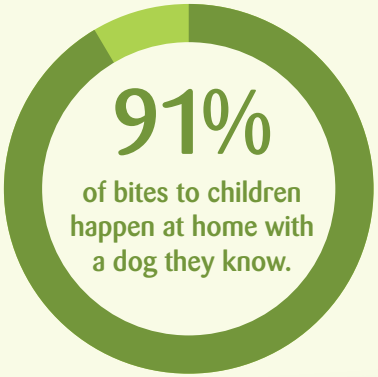
Chinchillas and degus are highly social animals. In the wild, chinchillas live in large groups of up to 100! In captivity Chinchillas are most happy, when bonded carefully and living in small same sex pairs, small groups or a castrated male and female. Degus also prefer their own kind and are most happy in small same sex pairs or groups.

Rats, Mice & Gerbils

Rats, mice, and gerbils also require social interaction with other members of their breed and can become depressed when kept alone. They form dominance hierarchies and should not be separated once established, as this can lead to aggression. Make sure to provide plenty of hiding spaces to give them safe places to retreat. If fighting occurs, it may be necessary to separate individuals who are not compatible.

Know your dog – don't become another stat!

Dog attacks in the UK are a growing concern, with incidents on the rise. In 2023, over 8,000 severe dog bite injuries were reported by the NHS, a trend that has steadily increased over the past decade (BBC News, 2024). What many dog owners consider to be minor, manageable behaviours can quickly escalate into more serious signs of aggression. If left unaddressed, these behaviours can lead to injury or even worse. It's essential to seek help as soon as aggression starts, before the situation worsens.



What causes dog aggression?

Aggression in dogs can stem from various causes, but fear is often the primary trigger. Dogs use aggression as a form of communication when they feel threatened. Initially, a fearful dog may display subtle signs of unease or try to avoid the situation, however, if escape isn't possible, the dog may resort to aggressive behaviour to protect itself.

Most dogs only act aggressively when they feel they have no other option, which makes it crucial to avoid putting your dog in situations where this behaviour might be triggered.

While dealing with aggression can be unsettling for owners, the good news is that there are steps to prevent it from escalating. Early intervention can protect both people and dogs.

To find out more about safety around dogs, understanding dog body language and the canine ladder of communication – visit www.gawa.org.uk/tips-advice/dog-and-child-safety

Recognising signs of fear and aggression

Dogs rarely bite without warning, but the early signs of fear and aggression can be subtle and if repeatedly ignored, they may even be skipped by the dog. Recognising these early signs is the key to preventing aggression from developing.

Signs of fear can include tucked tails, cowering, or a stiff body posture. If your dog shows any of these signs, it's important to remove them from the situation. Never punish a dog for expressing fear, as this can exacerbate the behaviour.

Preventing dog aggression

Several ways you can help reduce the risk of aggression:

Socialisation: Introducing your dog to different people, animals, and environments during puppyhood helps them grow into well-adjusted adults.

Training: Positive, reward-based training helps reinforce calm behaviour, making it more likely your dog will respond well to new experiences.

Lead walking: Keeping your dog on a lead in unfamiliar areas gives you more control and helps prevent potential triggers taking your dog by surprise.

Awareness of other dogs: Always be cautious when meeting unfamiliar dogs.

Learning body language: Understand your dog's body language and the warning signs of aggression.

What to do if your dog shows aggression

If your dog starts to show signs of aggression, it's important to act quickly. Aggression tends to escalate over time, leading to potential injury. Consult your vet to rule out any medical issues and to discuss your dog's behaviour. A certified behaviourist can also help your dog cope with triggers and teach you healthier ways to react.

If you have any concerns about your dog's behaviour, please contact our qualified behaviour team on behaviour@gawa.org.uk.

Dog tails

One-year-old **Persi** came into our care when his owners could no longer give him the time he needed to develop and thrive.

A big dog with an even bigger heart, Persi is sweet-natured and eager to find an experienced owner who can provide him with the time, training, and attention he deserves.

Persi has so much love to give and would do best in a pet-free home with a secure garden to call his own.

Tetley, a one-year-old crossbreed, is a gentle and shy boy who came to us as a stray.

He can become anxious in unfamiliar situations and would love to find a patient family that will offer reassurance and support to help him flourish.

Tetley enjoys enrichment activities like snuffle mats and puzzle feeders, and loves spending time with his carers. He is progressing well with his training and would like to find a quiet village or rural home with a loving family who will allow him to adjust at his own pace and help him feel secure.

One-year-old **Rudy** is a sweet boy with a kind heart who came to us as a stray.

Understandably, Rudy can feel nervous when meeting new people, however he quickly warms up and enjoys playing with his human friends once he feels comfortable.

Rudy loves brain games and a good fuss from his carers, but he isn't fond of busy environments or loud noises. We would therefore love to find him a peaceful country or village home, away from busy areas, with a family who can support his training and provide him with the unconditional love and attention that he deserves.

These dogs may have been adopted by the time you receive your newsletter, but there are plenty more who need homes.

Animal Days for young enthusiasts!

Our animal experience days are inclusive, unique opportunities for young people aged 5-16 to spend time with our rescue animals during the school holidays.

Attendees learn about pet ownership, pet safety, and interact with our rescue dogs, cats or small animals. They may clean a pen or kennel and create a craft or enrichment item for the animals, learning how to interact with them safely and understand their behaviour.

For more information, please email education@gawa.org.uk or visit our website www.gawa.org.uk/animal-days

Frozen pet treats!

Beat the heat by making your furry friend their very own frozen lollies! Simply add their favourite treat to some water and pop it in the freezer! Once frozen, supervise your pet while they enjoy a refreshing and tasty cool down on hot summer days!

Volunteer and create change

Jacqui has volunteered for over three years and is a fantastic asset to the Shelter. Find out why she enjoys volunteering.

Why do you volunteer at the Shelter?
I've always been passionate about helping animals, and after I retired I wanted to do something different to my technical career. I wanted to have new experiences and meet new people.

What opportunities were open to you?
I own guinea pigs and was lucky enough to be given the opportunity to work with the small animals. I clean pens and work with them to improve their confidence. I've learned so much, which helps me with my own pets. I also attend outreach events to raise awareness to help support the education team.

How much time do spend volunteering?
I spend about six hours a week volunteering at the Shelter, but even if you have just a couple of spare hours each week you can make a difference.

What would you say to somebody considering volunteering?
I highly recommend it! You meet like-minded people and it's never too late to learn something new.

We all love a happy ending!

Tony

Two-year-old Tony arrived at the Shelter as a stray on Halloween, having been found and taken to a police station. We could tell he had lots of love to give and he soon found a home, but sadly this didn't work out and he came back to us for a further four weeks before going to his forever home in January.

"He has settled in very well at home and I haven't noticed any signs of depression or anxiety. He can't get enough of his food, treats, and puzzle feeders. He has met some other close members of the family, who he has showered with cuddles and affection. He is definitely a people person!"

Tommy (now Baloo)

Tommy the kitten was around 12 weeks old when he was brought to us by someone who thought he had been hit by a car. Our vets checked him over, and saw that in addition to an old break in his back leg, he also had a birth defect that meant his foot was facing backwards!

The only course of action to save this little chap was to amputate the back leg and give him the best possible chance of a pain-free life as a tri-paw. After recovering from his surgery, this gorgeous grey tabby was snapped up by a lovely couple who have adopted from us before.

"Baloo is doing brilliantly; he is the happiest little boy who has been a ray of sunshine in our house. The first night we had him he slept on my chest all night and since then he comes upstairs every morning, gets under the duvet and cuddles us for hours. He has become best friends with our dog Winnie (who we also rescued from CAS in 2020), trying to play with her constantly but also sneaking cuddles from her when he can."

Rex

Two-and-a-half-year-old Border Collie, Rex, was born blind so when he came to the Shelter we knew he would need a very special family who could manage his environment and help him navigate the world. Happily for Rex, just the right people came forward to adopt him and it sounds like he is thriving in his new home.

"Rex has settled into our home really well and we have a good routine going. He was quite anxious at first and he didn't cope too well with the noise of cars on walks, but he's doing so much better now. Despite being blind it didn't take him long to get used to the layout of the house, although he does still occasionally bump into the odd door or chair!

He loves running around and playing in our garden and at our local park. We've recently got a ball with bells and he is getting good at following the sound. He loves playing with his toys, especially if they have treats inside! He loves a good cuddle, belly rubs, head scratches and spends a lot of time taking well deserved naps!"

Peter and Nibbles

Five-year-old bunny buddies, Peter and Nibbles, came to the Shelter when their young owner lost interest in them. It took three months to find these lovely lads the right home, but they have now landed firmly on their paws!

"They have both settled amazingly, very relaxed and confident bunnies. Our little routine is that they have fresh veggies in the morning and whilst they're busy munching I do a quick spot clean. They've proven themselves to be excellent house rabbits already and have briefly met the cat and dog but none of them were phased, which is great! A smooth transition for everyone I'm thrilled with how they've slotted in so well!"

We would like to thank everyone who comes forward to adopt a homeless pet.

Take on a challenge for pets in need

We have picked some really exciting events for 2025 to inspire our supporters to raise money for our pets in need.

Whether you fancy running, swimming or skydiving, there is nothing like the buzzing atmosphere of taking part in an organised event.

Cheltenham Running Festival – 8th June

Choose to run the 5k, 10k or half marathon around the famous Cheltenham Racecourse.

Arla Great North Swim – 13-15 June

Choose from five different open water swimming distances to suit all ages, abilities, and level of experience. Sign up for the half mile, one mile, two mile, 5k or 10k wild swimming events.

Run Cheltenham – 21st September

Choose to run the chip-timed 10k or half marathon around Regency Cheltenham in the town's biggest annual running event.

Inflatable 5k Cheltenham – 4th October

This is a really fun event to take part in on your own or as part of a team and the atmosphere will be electric with pumping music and lots of laughs. With a choice of distances to choose from, there is something for all ages and abilities! Run the 2.5k, 5k, 10k or 15k courses.

Skydive!

Join #TeamCAS and take to the skies for a breathtaking and exhilarating experience of a lifetime. Available to book at airfields across the UK with various days and times to choose from, all year round.

Fun for young fundraisers

We're thrilled when our young supporters show their passion for animals by fundraising for us! That's why we've handpicked four exciting events that are perfect for kids to join, with entry fees starting at just £5 and no minimum fundraising goal.

Junior Race at Cheltenham Running Festival – 8th June 2025

This flat route covers 0.7km around Cheltenham Racecourse so is a great opportunity for budding athletes to take to the tracks.

Move More Mile at Run Cheltenham – 21st September 2025

Suitable for all ages and abilities the Move More Mile is a great way to start getting active and raise money for pets in need.

2.5k course at Inflatable 5k, Cheltenham – 4th October 2025

Get ready to bounce your way through The World's BIGGEST and most EPIC Inflatable 2.5K Obstacle Course!

Kids Race at Run Alton Towers – 15th November 2025

Take part in Run Alton Towers Kids Race at the UK's largest theme park. You are guaranteed a great day out with theme park entry and access to all the rides included in your race entry!!

Cheltenham Animal Shelter

Shop and support animals in need

Exciting News!

In addition to our well-loved charity shop at Gardners Lane, we're thrilled to announce the opening of our second charity shop at 25 Winchcombe Street, right in the heart of Cheltenham town centre. Come to visit us and support a great cause!

Both shops offer convenient locations for our local community to combat rising prices and shop sustainably from a range of men's, women's and kids' clothes and accessories, books, games, CDs, DVDs, homewares, dog accessories and more.

Please visit our website for opening hours for both shops and items we accept as donations
www.gawa.org.uk/charity-shop

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

Cheltenham Animal Shelter, Gardners Lane, GL51 9JW
Call us: 01242 523521 Visit us: www.gawa.org.uk
Charity registration number: 1081019