

Bristol Animal News

BRISTOL DOGS & CATS HOME AND RSPCA BRISTOL CLINIC NEWSLETTER

Intensive Care Appeal

As the largest RSPCA Branch Clinic in the country, we provide an essential veterinary service to thousands of lost, sick and injured stray animals and subsidised treatment for people on a low income, preventing unnecessary suffering.

The Clinic operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, ensuring that help is available for any animal that is in need of emergency medical care. We are very proud of the work we do at the Clinic and hope that you agree.

As one of our "Animal Hospital's" many services, the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) plays a vital role in the treatment and care of seriously ill and injured animals. It provides a warm, quiet and less stressful environment, with specialist equipment such as incubators, piped oxygen and 2 heated kennels.

Animals involved in Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs); those with urinary tract disease, respiratory disease or diabetes; nervous/stressed animals such as wild animals; those recovering from serious operations; all rely on the therapy received in ICU to survive.

As the economic downturn takes its toll, our client base is increasing, placing a massive strain on the resources available. While other forms of veterinary care may be within their means, when an animal is in need of intensive care it can be too much for some owners to afford. We are therefore seeing a dramatic increase in the need for this specialist care as more people are turning to us for help.

In addition, an increase in the number of stray animals has resulted in more ill and injured animals



needing our emergency treatment. One such stray cat was Velvet. She was brought into the Clinic for critical care having been involved in a RTC. Her jaw had been fractured and she had a prolapsed eye (the eyeball had popped out). After emergency surgery to repair her jaw and insert a feeding tube, she was transferred to ICU where she received special liquid nutrition, frequent strong pain relief and constant observation by the veterinary nurses. Sadly we could not save the eye and it had to be removed which meant she underwent a second anaesthetic. Following that operation she was back in ICU with intravenous (IV) fluids and further close monitoring. Her stay in ICU lasted for 6 days. As she was a stray, the Branch bore the burden for the entire cost of her care. This intensive hospitalisation would have cost £1,600 in a private practice. Thankfully Velvet has made a full recovery and is now at the Dogs Home, waiting to start a new life.

The need for our ICU is clear. The unit is seldom empty averaging 5 animals using the facilities at any time. Due to the growing demand for our services, these facilities are being put under greater pressure and we are struggling to provide the care these animals desperately need. We are therefore launching our **Intensive Care Appeal** to help fund additional equipment that will enable us to give the best possible care to these highest risk and seriously ill patients, giving them the greatest chance for survival.

With your help we can provide...

- **Infusion Pumps (£800)** - very important for administering IV fluids, ensuring the patient receives the correct volume of fluid at the correct rate. With currently only 2 pumps, we are forced to prioritise which animals are the most in need and vulnerable, spending more time monitoring the remaining animals closely, removing staff from helping other animals in need.
- **Infusion Warmers (£200)** - keep the IV fluid warm before entering the animal. We currently have no infusion warmers.
- **Vet Bed (£16 per kennel)** - a specialist bedding material that draws body fluid away from the animal, keeping it warm and comfortable.
- **Kennel Mounted IV Stands (£100)** - the ICU has little space meaning staff must keep moving floor stands. This is both distressing for the animals and hazardous to staff when carrying an animal.

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Intensive Care Appeal

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Other items include digital thermometers, heat pads, medical feeding tubes, urinary catheters & chest drains.

Every penny really does count and by contributing to the Intensive Care Appeal you can help us to continue our important work, providing life saving care to the most vulnerable of animals, giving them the chance for a brighter future.

You can make a donation towards the appeal by completing a donation form, calling us on 0117 3003968 or you can make a secure online donation at www.justgiving.com/ICUAppeal. You can also join our Healthy Paws & Claws scheme – providing a regular gift which will help us provide for these animals for years to come.

Please support our appeal today and you can help make the difference between life and death



RSPCA Week is almost upon us once again and more than ever we need you to get involved and *Do Something Special* for animals in need - helping us provide a happier future to thousands of unwanted and neglected local animals!

What is RSPCA Week?

RSPCA Week is a national event aimed at raising funds and awareness for the work of local independent Branches and animal homes just like us. Once again we'll be taking part in collections at Tesco stores around Bristol, we have our sponsored Mutt Strutt for you to take part in and of course we are encouraging people like you to *Do Something Special* for animals in need!

How to get involved with RSPCA Week?

We will be collecting at Tesco stores in Yate, Thornbury, Brislington and Henleaze (Lime Trees Road) during the week. Please do come along and support us. We'd love to meet you!

Maybe you'd be interested in giving us a hand to collect during the Week – all money raised goes to help local animals. You can commit as much or as little time as you can spare (we would suggest around 2 hours) – we are a friendly group and would love to have you on board. Just give us a call on 0117 3003968 or send an e-mail to rebecca@rspca-bristol.org.uk

Mutt Strutt

We are also holding a sponsored Mutt Strutt (dog walk) on Saturday 7th May which leaves from Bristol Dogs & Cats Home at 10am. The 3 mile circular walk will take you and your four legged companion around some of Bristol's historic landmarks - not only will you be able to stretch the legs of one of our residents, giving them an exciting trip out but you will be raising vital funds for more animals in need. Places are limited so please don't delay, register today.

Doing Something Special

We'd like you to consider holding an event at your place of work or school, college or even amongst friends at home, if you'd like inspiration why not request one of our free fundraising packs crammed full of ideas, tips and information to make your activity a huge success. Please don't forget to tell us what you're up to – you may appear in the next newsletter! So go on, put the FUN into Fundraising and *Do Something Special* for animals in need!

A Christmas Cracker

The 2010 Christmas Fair was a real record breaker! More people than ever arrived to enjoy the sunny event even if it was a little on the nippy side! Thanks to the fantastic turn out, we were able to raise a massive £3,505 for animals in need – our largest total to date!

With tasty refreshments and a wonderfully festive atmosphere (added to by the beautiful singing of the St. George Singers and Santa himself) the event was a huge success.

A big thank you to everyone who came along to support us and all of our dedicated volunteers who helped out, despite a few blue lips!

Watch This Space

We may be taking part in a mass sponsored Abseiling Challenge in Bristol, later in the year. If you've ever fancied scaling the face of a high rise building in the centre of Bristol, or if you wouldn't dream of it but want to challenge yourself to raise funds for animals in need, then keep an eye on our website for further details later in the year!



Oh Rats!

2011 at Bristol Dogs & Cats Home started with a flourish with the arrival of over 20 domestic rats, taking our new small animal section to breaking point. RSPCA Animal Welfare Officer, Carl Hone, was called to a property in Redcliffe, Bristol where someone had allowed his few pet rats to breed until the situation was out of control.

Carl and his RSPCA co-workers were shocked at the condition of the property. There was food and rubbish everywhere, the perfect breeding ground for rats! They began the painstaking process of finding and collecting the rats, which was no mean feat. Luckily for them, some were already in cages so they were easy to remove, but the rest were running free and had made their way under sofas, in wardrobes and even in the kitchen units, building nests as they went!

It took the RSPCA officers 2 days to remove the rats and then they had the challenge of finding local rescue centres that could take them. Bristol Dogs Home took 17 rats from the first visit and then another 4 baby rats the next day.

Luckily the 4 baby rats found foster homes straight away, leaving us to concentrate on finding good homes for the remaining adult rats. Amongst these, one rat in particular stood out and soon became a staff favourite. He was the largest male rat, hand tame and very sociable and friendly. He became affectionately known as 'Big Daddy'. We are looking for loving new homes for him and the other 19 rats in our care (as well as many other small animals), so if you've ever considered taking on a pet rat or two, then please come and see us.

Tammy's Tummy Trouble That Wasn't!



One of our prime aims at the Clinic is to promote neutering, and one of our most important functions is to offer reduced-cost neutering for pet-owners on low incomes. This is not only because neutering is the best way of tackling the huge numbers of unwanted pets that end up being neglected or abandoned, but because there are some real health and welfare benefits to neutering.

Tammy is a 6 year old Staffordshire Bull Terrier cross that passed through our wards recently, and she's a very good example of why our vets recommend that female dogs should be spayed.

Tammy's owners are registered clients at the Clinic, who came to us when Tammy was a puppy for her vaccinations. Although they talked to the vets about neutering at that time, like many dog owners, they "never quite got round to it"...

A few weeks ago, Tammy seemed to go a bit off colour. She wasn't eating her food and she vomited once or twice as well. Tammy's owners weren't too worried – they thought she had just picked up a tummy bug. But after it had been going on a couple of days, they rang the Clinic to ask for some advice, thinking that maybe they just needed to pick up some medicine for a stomach upset.

Gill, one of our experienced veterinary receptionists, took the call. She followed her training and started asking Tammy's owner lots of questions, to make sure she gave the

best advice. A couple of the answers rang serious alarm bells with Gill – "yes, Tammy was drinking a lot of water, and yes, her tummy did seem to be a bit swollen". Straight away Gill advised that Tammy should come in as soon as possible for an appointment to see the vet. Gill was concerned that Tammy might have something much worse than a tummy upset - she was showing some of the classic signs of a uterus infection.

Sure enough, that's exactly what was wrong. After examining the dog, the vet confirmed the diagnosis - Tammy had pyometra, which is a serious and life-threatening infection of the uterus. Tammy had a fever and was beginning to become toxic – she needed to be admitted immediately for intravenous fluid therapy and for an emergency hysterectomy to remove the infected uterus.

Tammy was spayed that same day – the operation was much more difficult and risky than a normal spay because Tammy's uterus was swollen to many times its normal size, the blood supply to the area was increased, and Tammy's toxic state meant that she was at more risk under anaesthetic. The vet had to be extremely careful that the infected uterus didn't contaminate the abdomen and the veterinary nurses had to monitor Tammy very closely the whole time she was asleep.

Happily, Tammy survived the surgery and after 24 hours of post-op monitoring in our Intensive Care Unit, she was discharged, and has gone on to make a full recovery. Her owner's were very grateful to Gill for realising that Tammy had more than just a tummy upset – her advice may well have saved Tammy's life.

Tammy's case is a good illustration of one of the health reasons for neutering - obviously spayed bitches are not at risk from this painful and dangerous condition. Bitches that are spayed early also have a dramatically reduced risk of getting cancer of the mammary glands.



Why I Volunteer by Hugh Marshall

Why did you decide to start volunteering?

My wife Anne and I have kept Old English Sheep Dogs for over 35 years (Bobbin, Emma, Bonnie and Ollie) and I had planned to do some charity work when I retired in October 2008. When the time arrived, dog walking at the Home seemed to fit the bill!

I enquired about volunteering and found out that one pre-requisite was to be over 18 for which I qualified(!) and so I came down to the Home and thoroughly enjoyed walking my first dog and it's continued from there. I walk whatever dog is given to me so I don't tend to build up an intimate relationship with them, like other dog walkers, but I very much enjoy the random nature of it.

What different roles have you performed and what have they involved?

Dog Walking is one of my main roles but over the last couple of years I have become more involved with helping the Fundraising team. I've been involved with the Mutt Strutt as a 'sweeper'- ensuring that all the dogs and people have arrived safely back at the Home after their 3 mile walk. I've also helped at Spring & Christmas Fairs and the Dog Shows, sometimes manning stalls but mainly helping with car park duties ensuring that all the vehicles are parked

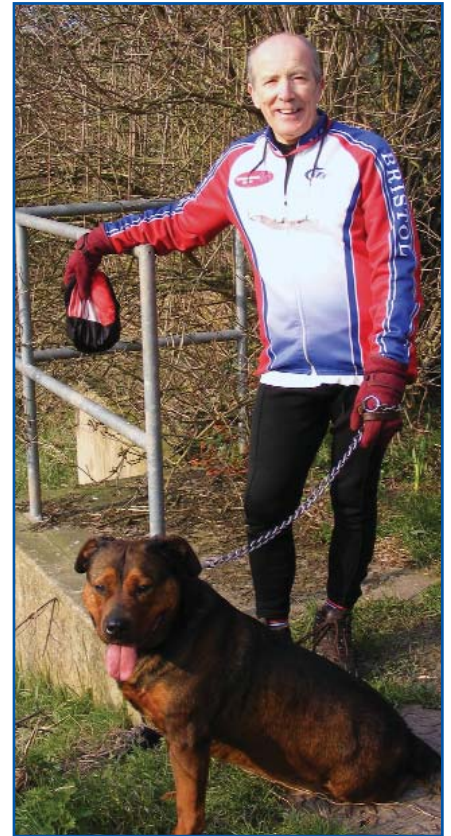
properly, as these events get incredibly busy!

More recently a group of volunteers and I went to the Bristol City Football Ground laden with buckets and tabards in the hope to collect plenty of money from the Bristol City and Scunthorpe fans. I watched the game but as a Bristol Rovers fan I avoided wearing blue! With a win for City and the rain holding back, it was a great day all round.

What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

I like the fact that it gives my week a structure. I'm a keen cyclist so I cycle down to the Home from Westbury where I live, thus combining my hobby and volunteering. I take great pleasure in meeting and walking the different variety of dogs. I particularly remember walking one dog named Michael who must have been at least 90 - 100lbs and as I'm not a big chap, I'm certain if I didn't have my sturdy walking boots on I would have been 'skiing' all the way down that river path!

Sadly our last dog Ollie was put down a couple of months ago so it does help to come to the Home and continue with dog walking. Ollie used to get 5 walks a day! We are considering getting another dog and there are certainly a couple of dogs here that I like and find attractive. Anne who is originally from America



has family coming over in May so we will think about getting another canine companion after that.

As well as helping to raise lots of money there is of course the element of a social life as well; socialising with the other volunteers and members of staff at the Home, catching up with friends at the Fairs or at the supermarket collections!

If you could be a dog what would you be?

An Old English Sheep Dog of course!

Canine Capers!



The biggest event in our calendar, the RSPCA Bristol Dogs and Cats Home **Dog Show & Fun Day** will be taking place on Sunday 26th June. Once again the event will be held at Whitehall Rugby Football Club in Speedwell and with plenty of fun to be had, it promises to be the best yet!

A day full of fun and attractions, this popular annual event is a great day out for the whole family, four legs and two! Browse a host of stalls selling a range of gifts and crafts, entertain the kids with rides, face painting and traditional games and then relax with a selection of tasty refreshments while you prepare yourself for the most important part - the dog show itself with our local 'Rescue Dog of the Year'. When you're not

focusing on your class you can enjoy the live music and entertaining displays or even have a go in the dog agility ring (your dog, not you!), where you could pick up a few tricks! There are even the special Doggy Games just for your canine companion.

So please come along and help us continue to care for local animals that are less fortunate than your own and have a great day out to boot! You'd be crazy to miss it!

Doors open at 10.30am until 4pm. Entry is £2 for adults, children get in for FREE. Parking available.

For more information, please contact us on 0117 3003962 or email jill@rspca-bristol.org.uk

UNWANTED FOR CHRISTMAS

Over the festive period we always receive many stray and unwanted animals and this year was no exception. On December 28th a 3 month old male Husky pup arrived at Bristol Dogs & Cats Home as a stray. The staff named the new arrival Frosty to match the weather.

Frosty was such a beautiful puppy, so it was hard to believe that he had was no longer loved by his previous owners. We can only assume that he was an unwanted Christmas present! Not surprisingly, as soon as his picture was placed on our website we were inundated with calls offering him a new home.

We chose a family in Devon for Frosty as they seemed perfect for him. They already owned 6 Huskies and a Border collie, so knew a great deal about the breed. They were ecstatic with Frosty and, when he's old enough, they are planning to add him to their Sled racing team with the other dogs.

Frosty has been in his new home for a few months now and is very happy and contented. Huskies can often prove a difficult breed to place, as they have very specific needs which may not suit many city homes. We were very lucky to have found this wonderful home for him and we are sure he is very grateful for his new life.



Rabbit Awareness Week...

because rabbits get a RAW deal

23rd- 29th May 2011

2011 is the first year that the RSPCA will be an official supporting partner of Rabbit Awareness Week (RAW). This annual week aims to raise awareness of the needs of companion rabbits. This year the focus is on behaviour – did you know that rabbits can reach speeds of up to 50mph for short bursts (if given the space)?

You will be able to find out more at the Dogs Home during RAW and watch this space for information about free rabbit health checks.

For more information about rabbit behaviour and more fun facts please visit www.rspca.org.uk/rabbits or find out about other local activities during RAW, visit www.rabbitawarenessweek.co.uk



Trekathon



Feeling active, wishing to explore the great outdoors and make a difference to animals in need but feel overseas challenged and parachute jumps are just too daunting? Then why not take

on one of our new UK based Trekathons! From the wonders of Stonehenge to the historical Hadrian's Wall, or even the more local Cheddar to Glastonbury hike - there really is something to suit everyone.

These one-day events cover a marathon distance of approx 26 miles, presenting a tough physical challenge and an ideal way to raise money for animals in need. They also make great team-building events!

Whether you fancy dramatic coastal scenery or quintessential English countryside, flatter terrain or rolling hills, there's plenty of choice. Trekathons take place throughout the year and are organised by the experts at Discover Adventure. So if you're ready for a challenge and want more information, please contact us on 0117 3003968 or email rebecca@rspca-bristol.org.uk.

Tombola Teddies

We don't just re-home dogs and cats (and ferrets, rabbits, rats, budgies, guinea pigs and the odd cockerel!!) we re-home teddies too! Do you have any unwanted soft toys? If so, we would love to take them off your hands and use them to raise even more for animals in need (they need to have the CE safety mark). Check under your bed, in your attic or in the garage and dig out those toys and bring them down to the Bristol Branch today!

Thank You!

Another opportunity for us to express our sincere thanks to all our supporters who have taken the time to carry out fun and interesting ways to help raise much needed funds for unwanted animals who rely on us for care, shelter and veterinary treatment.

We are one of the most active RSPCA Branches in the country, helping many thousands of animals every year. Like all Branches, we are an independent charity that receives no financial support from the National RSPCA, Government or Lottery and therefore rely entirely on local support to fund our work. Caring for so many unwanted and neglected animals costs the charity over £4,000 a day and without you, none of it would be possible.

Unfortunately we are unable print everyone's achievements but we hope you enjoy reading about just some of the individuals and groups that have helped us to continue our important work.

Members of the Core Services team at Capgemini in Bristol took part in a Pedometer Challenge raising a fantastic £121! Thank you to everyone involved and we hope you enjoyed your walk.



Staff from Capgemini meet one of the animals they are supporting

Hannah and Rachel Grimsley and their friend Maya raised £20 from selling cards and cakes at their Christmas Fair- they must have been delicious!

A 'Colour Theme Day' for the Support and Teaching Staff at Wellsway School helped raise £20. Thank you to all the staff and to Liz Davis who chose to donate the money to our charity. What a bright idea!

A big thank you goes to the Ramada Plaza Hotel who raised an incredible £1,635.49 at their Christmas Raffle helping our animals to have a very Merry Christmas.

We're delighted to report that once again our supporters at the Bedminster Spiritualist Church raised over £1,100 in October through various activities including their annual Harvest Festival and a Clairvoyant Evening!

Drum roll please- Julie Fletcher and her team helped raise over £800 by organising yet another Rock 'n' Roll concert at Hanham Hall last November!



Julie & her Rock 'n' Roll team visit the Home

Staff at BUPA Health Assurance held their Christmas Raffle which raised £701 which was then matched by BUPA itself! As well as this generous gift they also donated a substantial amount of dog and cat food for our Winter Food Appeal.

Year 4 Pupils at Henleaze Junior School grabbed their easels, put pen to paper, and sold their animal creations raising a 'fangtasssssstic' £73.47!

If you would like to receive our free Fundraising Supporter Pack full of ideas and tips to help you raise vital funds for RSPCA Bristol Branch and Bristol Dogs & Cats Home, please contact Rebecca on 0117 3003968 or email rebecca@rspca-bristol.org.uk



Back in October a couple of our dedicated supporters took on the challenge and had the experience of a lifetime. Natasha Lees and Jacquelyn Smith braved the skies and took part in sponsored Sky Dive to raise vital funds for animals in need.

Natalie told us "What an amazing and breathtaking experience! It was so exhilarating soaring through the sky at over 100mph, especially knowing I was raising money for such a good cause at the same time. It really was the ultimate thrill!"

Between them, Natasha and Jacquelyn raised over £600 for us, which is just fantastic!

If you are interest in taking part in any of our challenging events then please contact us on 0117 3003968 or visit our website for more information.

All's Well That Ends Well For Our Dobermans

Back in February 2010, Bristol Dogs & Cats Home admitted four Doberman puppies from the RSPCA for boarding while their owner was charged with counts of cruelty including illegal tail docking and keeping the animals in unsuitable conditions. There were over twenty dogs removed from this owner and we agreed to take four puppies for special care.

The pups, which we named Wanda, Woody, Sydney and Sunny were only 12 weeks old on arrival and were in poor physical condition. One had an infected tail stump, two had skin problems and all were a little underweight. Despite these ailments they were happy little pups, making them irresistible to all our staff and volunteers. They needed special care, ensuring they were well exercised, socialised and happy. This would stand them a better chance of settling into a new home, should the time arrive.

As with most RSPCA cases that are awaiting trial, weeks can soon turn into months and the Dobermans were fast becoming adults. It became



evident that two of the dogs were not happy in the kennels and we were able to find foster homes for Sunny & Wanda, with a member of staff and one of our regular volunteers. Woody

and Sydney remained quite content in kennels.

In November 2010, we were finally granted permission to re-home the four dogs after the Courts decided that they could be signed over to the RSPCA. By this time Woody, Wanda, Sydney and Sunny had grown into very loving and well socialised dogs.

It did not take long to place Wanda, as her foster carer could not bear to part with her and adopted her immediately. Sunny found a new home with another young Doberman and loves her new life. Sydney & Woody were also quick to find new homes, Sydney with a family in Bristol while Woody is living the life of Riley in the countryside.

We would like to say a massive thank you to all our staff and volunteers who helped make their long stay with us more engaging. Sadly the court case is still ongoing with regards to other dogs that were removed by the RSPCA. Let's hope the outcome for those dogs is just as happy.

Winter Warmer Appeal Update

Like so many things, our Winter Warmer Appeal sadly felt the effects of the economic downturn this year with collection outlets struggling to collect as much donated food as in previous years. In fact, the amount collected is approximately one third that of previous years. Monetary donations were also down as people tighten their belts for the months ahead.

However, we remain incredibly grateful to everyone who has contributed to the appeal, even more so under these circumstances – this year in particular, every tin really did make a difference! Tesco stores at Yate and Thornbury (thanks again to our volunteers Monica Stinchcombe and Terry & June Fear) did particularly well along with Smith's Autos in St. George and Greens at Kingswood. Asda at Longwell Green also collected a lot of food, thanks in part to Marilyn from customer services who announced the Appeal over the store's tannoy system. Once again Frampton Dog Training Club donated a fantastic £500 to the appeal bringing the total raised to £4,357.

We will be collecting food again during National RSPCA Week (2nd – 8th May) at a handful of Tesco stores around Bristol and there are also many outlets that collect for us throughout the year. So if you have a spare tin, do please think of us. Thank you.

One man's trash.....

Do you have an odd cufflink, a broken necklace, a snapped bracelet or a watch you no longer wear? You can now recycle all your unwanted or damaged jewellery – simply request a freepost envelope today and help raise much needed funds for animals in need!

Summer Prize Draw

Enter our 2011 Summer Prize Draw today and help raise much needed funds for animals in need. For your chance to win a Bose SoundDock® portable digital music system worth £350 from Paul Roberts Hi-Fi, a one nights stay at either The Ramada Bristol City Hotel or the Ramada Grange Country Club or one many more fantastic prizes, don't delay, enter today! Call 0117 3003968 or visit our website for more information and a full list of prizes.

Dates for Your Diary

Kathy's Coffee Mornings, Bristol Dogs Home

Sat 9th Apr, Sat 4th Jun, Sat 6th Aug,
10am -12.30pm

Bi monthly coffee morning & sale - books, hand-made cards, home-made cakes, bric-a-brac, raffle & refreshments!

RSPCA Week

Monday 2nd – Sunday 8th May

A national week raising funds and awareness for local branches and animal homes. Collections taking place throughout the week, concluding with the Mutt Strutt (see below).

Sponsored Mutt Strutt

Saturday 7th May,

Starts at 10am

Put your best paw forward with our sponsored Mutt Strutt. Stretch the legs of one of our residents and raise vital funds at the same time. Places are limited so don't delay, register today!

Annual Dogs Show & Fun Day

Sunday 26th June,

10.30am -4pm

With stalls, rides, games, live music, refreshments, entertaining displays and of course the dog show – you can't afford to miss it!

Charity Collection at Morrisons, Yate Tue 30th & Wed 31st August

If you can spare a couple of hours to help us collect much needed funds at this supermarket collection, please get in touch.

Bristol Half Marathon

Sunday 11th September

It's time to put your running shoes on and make a difference! We have limited charity places available for anyone who wants to get fit and raise money for animals in need, so get in touch today!

Charity Collection at Sainsburys, Kingswood

Fri 16th & Sat 17th September

If you can spare a couple of hours to help us collect much needed funds at this supermarket collection, please get in touch.

For more information on any of these events please contact us on
0117 3003968 or
email rebecca@rspca-bristol.org.uk

A night in the life of a Night Nurse



Anoushka Barnes has been working at the Clinic for over 5 years and qualified as a Veterinary Nurse a year ago. More recently she has taken on the role of Night Nurse for the Clinic. Here she explains a little about the job.

My main role involves staying on site to look after the in-patients and attending to owners who have brought in poorly pets. Often the public, Police, Animal Welfare Officers or RSPCA Inspectors bring in stray animals and wildlife which I have to admit. I thoroughly enjoy the challenge of emergency, critical care and medicine coupled with the responsibility this role commands. The shift patterns are not suitable for everyone but they work for me.

At night you work alone for most of your shift so there is no team to bounce ideas off or to communicate with so in this role, managing your time effectively is a must to ensure you complete all the tasks and keep patient care at its optimum. I love in-patient care and it's very easy to get attached to a patient. Looking after very poorly animals throughout the night can be incredibly rewarding, especially when their health improves. Sometimes (particularly in the summer) the shifts can be hectic but it's all part of the challenge! From time to time you can feel isolated as you may only see your team mates for less than an hour a day during the handover so we must always make the effort to mix in with the team. I come in for a

morning every month or so to meet with the team and keep well practiced at anaesthetics etc.

The residents of Bristol are fortunate to have such a fantastic RSPCA service, as uniquely, the Clinic is available to accommodate strays, wildlife and assist owners, 24hrs a day, 7 days a week, with sick animals which they cannot afford to have treated at private veterinary practices. We receive calls at all hours, from worried owners to police with stray dogs...even the odd sheep found roaming the streets of Bristol!

Every shift is different and can be extremely busy with in-patients and calls. Sometimes we have to do life saving emergency surgery during the night because the animal is too poorly to wait until morning. The surgery and aftercare can end up being challenging for both the patient and the nurse! I think it's so important to offer a 24 hour service and I am happy to work a shift that few people want to do.

The amazing service that the RSPCA offers, day and night, helps so many animals and owners that I feel privileged to work for such a worthwhile charity.

Few people realise that the Bristol Branch does not receive funding from the National RSPCA, Government or lottery. We operate purely for the health and safety of animals and that makes it so rewarding. Nursing is all I ever wanted to do and I feel proud to wear this uniform.