

Rabbit Awareness Week 2018 – Retailer PR Advice Pack

What is RAW 2018?

Each year, RAW focuses on raising awareness around one key welfare issue to help improve the lives of UK rabbits. Since 2011, inappropriate diet has been cited by veterinary professionals in the annual PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report as the top issue that needs to be addressed for rabbits.

This year's campaign is taking place between **June 2–June 10** and will address the issue of incorrect diet by **raising awareness around the risks of feeding muesli to rabbits**. The RAW 2018 website is hosting the Move Away from Muesli pledge – an online charter gathering the signatures of veterinary professionals, retailers and rabbit owners who are supporting this year's campaign.

Peer-reviewed research, published by the University of Edinburgh, demonstrated that rabbits fed on muesli diets will often selectively feed which can increase the risk of serious health issues, including:

- Dental Disease
- Obesity
- Reduced faecal output potentially leading to gut stasis
- Uneaten caecotrophs (sticky droppings) potentially leading to flystrike

Despite the associated risks, the PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report 2017 found that 25% of rabbit owners are still feeding their rabbits muesli, equating to '280,000 rabbits being fed a harmful diet'¹.

How can you help?

As a retailer, you play an important part in helping to ensure rabbit owners are making the right purchasing choices when it comes to the health and wellbeing of their pets.

There are plenty of resources available on the retailer section of the RAW website to help you educate your customers on the best way to feed their rabbits, including posters, nutritional guides and flyers.

If you're a retailer supporting this year's campaign, you can show your support online by visiting the RAW website and signing the Move Away from Muesli pledge. As well as containing useful information about this year's campaign, you can direct your customers to this website where they'll be able to learn more about the welfare needs of rabbits.

Helping your customers away from muesli

It's important to guide any customers who are currently feeding their rabbits muesli onto a healthier diet consisting of between 85-90% feeding hay. You can do this by following the

¹ PDSA Paw Report 2017 (www.pdsa.org.uk/pawreport) – number of rabbits based on the estimated population of 1.1 million pet rabbits in the UK.

Move Away from Muesli plan – an illustrative guideline showing how a rabbit's food bowl should look with the gradual elimination of muesli over a four-week period.

Converting customers away from muesli allows you to focus on the importance of high-quality feeding hay, supplemented by nuggets and the occasional snacks. Carefully explain the nutritional needs of rabbits to customers and the importance of a carefully balanced diet.

General tips on making the most of RAW

There are a number of benefits of being involved with this year's campaign. As well as promoting your nutritional knowledge, you're helping to improve the lives of more rabbits by helping owners transition their rabbits from a muesli-led diet onto a healthier, hay-led diet. Below are some additional tips to help you make the most of this year's campaign.

- Tell customers well in advance about your plans for the week to ensure maximum awareness of any events you are planning to hold.
- Ensure that all staff are well-informed about the week – consider holding a staff meeting so teams know about the key themes running through this year's RAW.
- Use your own social media platforms but also local community social pages to communicate online any plans you might have for the week, share any in-store deals, and generally advise people on the importance of rabbit welfare. You can do this by using the hashtags #RAW2018 and #RabbitAwareness on Twitter and Instagram.
- Use keen and enthusiastic staff with a genuine interest in rabbits where possible.
- Consider discounts on select products to encourage those customers who are making the move away from muesli. Contact your Burgess TSM for discounts and offers running through the RAW period.
- Use assets from the RAW packs to create stand-out POS displays for this year's campaign. Visually appealing displays will encourage customers to ask questions which can often lead to sales. Stand out from the crowd.

The Burgess Pet Care PR team at Fred Marketing is here to help you and give advice on how your practice or business can benefit from promoting RAW 2018 – please don't be hesitate to contact us if you need more information. We understand that some of you may not have social media channels in place or may be looking for support when it comes to approaching media contacts – and that's what we're here for!

We've attached guideline information on how to do this, but please get in touch with the team if you would like more information; we're happy to help you however we can.

You can contact Mat Ombler at the Burgess Pet Care PR team at Mat@Fredquarters.co.uk or by calling 01482 227227