

Rabbit Awareness Week 2018
PR Advice Pack for veterinary practices

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?

In your RAW 2018 packs you will find posters, hints, tips and lots of information for you and your clients. We would really appreciate your support; whether you are delivering health checks/MOTs or raising awareness through the display of RAW materials in your practice. You will also find drafted social media posts and assets to help you with the creation of online content.

There is a general lack of understanding around the welfare needs of rabbits. You can help promote responsible rabbit ownership online, as well as through any events or activities you have planned, by using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to share your top tips and information using the hashtags #RAW2018 and #RabbitAwareness. The official @RabbitAwareness Twitter will be posting regular updates which you can share and retweet at your own leisure.

General tips on making the most of RAW

¹ PDSA PAW Report 2017

We want RAW to be beneficial for all of the practices taking part and hope the below information provides you with useful advice on how you can make the most out of taking part in this year's campaign.

- Join your colleagues in the veterinary community who are offering discounted health-checks and MOTs to encourage more rabbit owners to visit their nearest practice. Did you know that *52%* of rabbits have not had a primary vaccination course and 32%* are not registered with a vet?*
- We understand that many rabbit owners are already aware of the risks of feeding rabbits muesli. This year's campaign is about mobilising these rabbit owners to help reach less-informed rabbit owners. Ensure rabbit owners are provided with the expert information they need from yourselves and encourage enthusiastic rabbit owners to share your advice via social media channels.
- Raise awareness of any activity you might have planned in advance by contacting your local press and issuing a press release where necessary. Always ensure social media channels are being regularly updated with the relevant hashtags and make the most of staff members who are genuinely enthusiastic about rabbits when possible.
- Use local community social media pages and groups to promote your RAW activity effectively to the community.
- Visit the RAW website for downloadable, printable assets to help you promote the campaign in your practice. Local advertising, waiting room displays, goodie bags and practice newsletters are just some of the ways to do this.
- Tell clients well in advance about your plans for the week to ensure maximum awareness of your events.
- Several practices have noted that rabbit information evenings and seminars have been well-attended (if you're a practice with a large number of registered rabbits).
- Think of creative ways to link this year's campaign back to the 5-animal welfare needs: Environment, Diet, Behaviour, Companionship and Health. You are the experts, so we know that your contribution to this year's campaign will be as invaluable as ever.

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