



The Pet Column

By Abbas Hussain of Principal Pets

FIVE NEEDS

In this column we explore the five basic welfare needs of animals, as set out in the Animal Welfare Act of 2006, and what they mean for you as pet owners.

1. The need for a suitable environment

This means that all pets should have the right to suitable housing. This would include having the right sized aquarium for fish, the right sized cages for hamsters and gerbils and hutches large enough for rabbits and guinea pigs. For example, a Syrian hamster's cage should be at least 30x75cm, whereas a dwarf hamster would need a cage at least 30x60cm. A rabbit requires room in its hutch to hop along three times and comfortably stand up on its hind legs. Animals also have the right to be comfortable in their homes, so the correct bedding should be provided and changed regularly.

2. The need for a suitable diet

Providing the right food is not only beneficial to the animal, but also for the pet's owner. If your pets don't receive the correct nutrition they can become overweight, underweight, or in some cases poisoned. For example, guinea pigs can be prone to scurvy if they are not fed enough vegetables. Rabbits, however, can be prone to weight gain or sickness, even death, if they are fed too much fruit or high-fat vegetables. Poisonous foods to dogs include chocolate, grapes, raisins and even apple cores.

3. The need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns

Animals, in all aspects of their lives, should be able to show their natural behaviour without becoming stressed or unhappy. Most dogs, for example, are playful, sociable animals and they enjoy playing together with toys, people and other dogs. Pets shouldn't be scared or show unnatural body language. If an animal is unhappy, they will normally exhibit abnormal behavioural patterns such as excessive vocalisation, excessive licking of the floor or walls, self-injury, weaving and even obsessive-compulsive behaviour. This list is by no means complete, but shows some common behaviours of animals that may not be happy in their environment.

4. The need to be housed with or apart from other animals

For some animals, companionship is a must, whereas other animals are solitary and must be kept apart. Rats, for example, thrive in pairs and small groups. Syrian hamsters, on the other hand, should be kept apart. It is also important to know which pets prefer companions and who those companions should be. For many years it was seemingly common practice to keep guinea pigs with rabbits, but this has now been found to be dangerous for both parties. Bonded rabbits, however, will often be found grooming themselves and each other as a sign of acceptance and contentment.

5. The need to be protected from pain, suffering and disease

It goes without saying that no pet lover would want an animal to suffer from pain, injury or disease. From a chinchilla to a cat or a dog, all pets should be provided with the care they need and should never be harmed. Dogs, for example, feel pain and are believed to have similar pain thresholds to people. However, individual dogs will show pain in different ways. Any changes in the way a pet normally behaves may be an indicator that the animal is in pain or suffering from a disease. Changes in eating and drinking habits, unwillingness to exercise or play could all be early indicators. They may become withdrawn and shy away from being touched. They may also show physical symptoms such as: discharges from eyes, ears, or nose; vomiting; diarrhoea; constipation; excessive scratching or even limping. This list is by no means complete and is just for guidance. If your animal exhibits symptoms of pain or disease please seek veterinary guidance.



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Residents celebrate International Women's Day

Residents from a Wirral care home celebrated International Women's Day last week with a range of activities to highlight the success of women.

International Women's Day is annually held on March 8 to recognise women's achievements throughout history and across nations.

The Hazelwell, a residential, nursing, palliative and respite care home in Oldfield Road, Heswall, hosted an afternoon tea for its residents where the women talked about what they had achieved in their lives.

One resident, Lilian Smith, 93, joined the Women's Royal Naval Service (or Wrens as they were popularly known) in 1940 during the Second World War and was stationed in Liverpool. Her first posting was to Scotland on the front line defending the piers against the German submarines. Lilian also volunteered to go to Germany after the war to help look after orphans in the refugee camps.

Another resident from The Hazelwell, Margy Pugh, 72, got her first job working for The Little Sisters of the Poor in Liverpool where she cared for the elderly before she trained to become a nurse. Margy was married for 56 years and ran pubs on the Wirral, including the Horse & Jockey in Arrowpark Road, Upton, and The Imperial in Whitfield Street, Birkenhead.

The afternoon was followed by a screening of the 2015 British period drama film *Suffragette* in The Hazelwell's impressive cinema room. The care home's fabulous facilities also include a salon and nail bar, gym, library and a stunning rooftop terrace with views over the River Dee.

The Hazelwell's Care Home Manager Liza Millington said: "We all enjoy celebrating different calendar events at The Hazelwell, and International Women's Day is a very special one for us. Our women residents have done so much in their lives and it's great to focus on that.

"They really enjoyed reliving their great achievements and sharing in past successes. It was wonderful for us all to hear the stories and get a sense of their triumphs, often in a time of adversity."

For more information about The Hazelwell contact Liza on 0151 342 9654, email info@thehazelwell.com or visit www.thehazelwell.com