

Open Paw for cats is underway at NAWT promising pawfect changes to the welfare of rescue cats. Wendy Richmond reports.

Following the success of Open Paw for dogs, work has started on a similar programme for the charity's rescue cats. The pilot is due to begin this autumn at the Hertfordshire Centre and will focus on feline environmental enrichment to reduce stress in the cattery, alleviate boredom and encourage natural behaviours.

While full details are yet to be revealed, NAWT is very excited about creating another UK first in animal welfare. At the centre of the Open Paw for cats scheme will be a pioneering new product from the US called the NoBowl Feeding System.

Just as Open Paw feeds dogs through interactive toys like stuffed Kongs to help reduce stress, the NoBowl feeding system offers cats a fresh approach to eating that will entice them to "hunt" for their food and derive great pleasure as a result.

The system consists of five NoBowls, mouse-shaped containers designed to mimic prey that even "roll" in a predictable way to mimic the hunt. The hollow body is where a portion of the cat's dry food allowance is stored and two open holes will distribute the treat during play.

The NoBowl Feeding System is designed with a soft skin to further stimulate the cats, who use their claws and teeth during the hunting experience. Once cats have been trained to transition over to the new way of eating, their daily allowance of food can be evenly distributed between 5 NoBowls for maximum enjoyment.

The system was invented in the US by vet Dr Liz Bales, a cat owner herself, who came up with the idea through a sense of frustration about the fate of so many cats.

"The number one cause of death for cats in the US is not kidney disease, as many people think, it's euthanasia; because so many cats end up being surrendered to shelters normally due to the owner's frustration with behaviour problems that the owner cannot live with. I felt I was failing in how I was treating cats, one of my largest patient



NoBowl mimics prey

F.E.E.D.Co and PetPlan are sponsoring NAWT's Open Paw for cats scheme. Follow us on our website, Youtube and Facebook for regular updates. The NoBowl system will be available to purchase shortly from our centres and shop.

groups, and through further study found that a lack of feline enrichment plays into so many of our cats' disease processes." For cats, hunting is part of what neuro scientists call "The Seeking Circuit." In the seeking circuit, the brain releases dopamine, which heightens interest and creates a great feeling of anticipation. In nature, cats hunt and engage this seeking circuit between 9-20 times across a 24 hour day. Removed from the opportunity to hunt, cats are denied their natural instincts which can lead directly to physical, behavioural and mental problems.

NoBowl was launched thanks to a successful crowdfunding programme and the first packages have already begun shipping. Part of Dr Bales' aim is to ensure that rescue centres both in the US and overseas can try them out, because that is where cats' stress can be worst.



Cats hunt naturally between 9-20 times a day

It is a radical solution and Dr Bales is ready with answers to many of my questions, such as does it mean converting your cat to dry food, and what about the mess as food is distributed by the feeders all over the house.

She said: "The first NoBowl product is for dry food and on the trials we've done, people have said there is no mess.

"It's a revolutionary concept and I liken NoBowl to bicycle helmets. It will take a little while for the information to really get into the hands of the average cat owner but once it does and we see a strengthening of the human-animal bond as a result, which is what we are seeing from our trials, we think it will be really understood."

"I am so delighted that we are doing this with the NAWT as they really care about the welfare of cats and we are looking forward to working with them on this exciting development."

Win your own NoBowl Feeding System

NAWT is offering one cat and their loving owner the chance to be among the first in the UK to use this ground-breaking product. Simply write and tell us what you love about your cat by Friday December 30*. Send your entry marked CAT Competition, to NAWT, Tylers Way, Watford, Herts WD25 8WT.

*Terms and conditions on p16.



Dr Liz Bales

Introducing the new NAWT Will writing scheme for supporters and volunteers.

All charities rely on legacies for part of their income. The National Animal Welfare Trust is no different, and has been looking at ways to offer a Will writing service to help people who are considering making a Will for the first time, or updating an old one.

The Goodwill Partnership is the largest distributor of home-visit solicitor-provided Wills in England and Wales. It guarantees the lowest price for a home-visit Will, which is checked and provided directly to a supporter by a panel firm of solicitors, who can also provide legal advice and storage of your signed Will.

The process of making your Will is made extremely simple. There are no visits to the solicitor; a trained counsellor comes to the home to take Will instructions at a time convenient to you - whether daytime, evenings or weekends.

More importantly, there is no obligation on the part of supporters to leave a legacy gift to NAWT, although it is hoped that the initiative will generate much-needed additional legacy funds over time.

Charges are a low fixed price, however detailed your Will, wherever you live, and do not come with any hidden costs or any selling of further products. The home-visit service is free of

charge, and there is also a small discount on a second Will for a spouse or partner.

As charities come under increasing scrutiny from watchdog The Charity Commission due to a number of high profile scandals and high staff salaries, NAWT would like to stress how it strives to be different in how it operates.

Director of

Administration at the NAWT Dawn Webster said: "We work incredibly hard to keep spend on fundraising and other activities to the bare minimum, so that around 80% of our



Dawn Webster

“ Writing a Will is an extremely personal decision and we are so grateful to the people who support NAWT in this way. It means we can carry on our vital work well into the future. ”

income received goes straight on animal welfare.

"Since we do not have a large sophisticated fund-raising department, NAWT relies on revenue from long-lasting and loyal relationships with our supporters."

These include people like Brian Rickard, a cat loving uncle of two very active NAWT supporters, who left a small legacy to the Cornwall Centre. Staff were able to remember him with an appropriate plaque in one of the cat enrichment pens which his gift enabled the centre to build.

Another very long-term friend from the very early days of the Cornwall centre was Doreen Woodroffe. Her legacy meant the charity could buy three sheds to use for dog training rooms for the Open Paw Programme.

Dawn adds: "Writing a Will is an extremely personal decision and we are so grateful to the people who support NAWT in this way. It means we can carry on our vital work well into the future."

Writing a Will is the only way people can guarantee how assets are shared amongst family and friends. It also allows you to decide who should look after any dependants that are left behind.

If there is no Will, then the courts may make these decisions for you. People often assume that their spouse or partner will be the main beneficiary of their estate but the court may decide otherwise. As well as making sure your loved ones are cared for, a professionally written Will can save the beneficiaries of your estate paying unnecessary tax through careful inheritance tax planning.

If you would like to know about The Goodwill Partnership either visit our website or talk to Dawn on 020 8838 7081 for advice.



Doreen Woodroffe memorial plaque

Hannah & Kitten



Meet the super trainers

The trainer stars of *Rescue Dog to Super Dog* discuss their runaway hit with Wendy Richmond



like the fact that one TV reviewer likens trainers Jo-Rosie Haffenden and Nando Brown to a crime fighting duo. While they don't solve actual crimes, their work in the Channel 4 TV show does make for thrilling viewing. If you haven't caught the series, Jo-Rosie and Nando have to select and train six dogs to help people with a far ranging array of physical problems live more independent lives.

There's Emily who collapses up to 30 times a day due to her narcolepsy and cataplexy. There's Alan who suffers from Tourette's and needs company and a calming influence in his life. And there are the children Enola and Dom, both suffering from different mobility issues.

Across the episodes we witness the trials and tribulations as Jo-Rosie and Nando take a dog each and work with their handler to help the animal assist with a number of specific tasks.

While it no doubt makes gripping, tear-jerking television, I want to know more about the reality, and whether in fact any rescue dog could become a super dog?

Jo-Rosie explains: "Rescue dogs are very eligible for this work. Interestingly enough people often say to me that it's only puppies that you can be certain of because you can



mould their character. However they still have personalities and you don't really know what they are like until you start working with them.

"When you are looking at a rescue dog, you're not only seeing a finished character, you're seeing that dog at probably the worst moment in their lives, suffering trauma. If you can still get the dog to work with you in that situation then that's a dog that's got something to offer."

This doesn't mean every rescue dog is suitable though.

The duo assessed at least 200 dogs to find the special six for the people they were trying to help. There were some strict basic criteria that had to be met first – for example, many of the animals were going into homes where there were already pet dogs and cats. Second, all the dogs had to be good with children. The third, and perhaps the most pivotal part, was their trainability – each selected dog was good at retrieving and being on lead.

The dogs also had to enjoy working, and that is perhaps the hardest part to assess. The fate of Dalmation Daisy hangs in the balance in one episode when she fails to perform the required tasks for her young charge, Dom.

Jo-Rosie explains: "When she settled in her new home, Daisy was simply happy to be there and didn't really want to do anything else. It happens. Some dogs are just like that. We discussed rehoming the dog with the family but Dom had become so attached to Daisy that they wanted to keep her anyway. In the end, she was still a massive comfort to that family, as she was such a great companion to the boy – because they developed such a strong bond."

Rescue assistant dogs can also work well because of what the TV show describes as hyper-attachment, when dogs that were previously given up bond so strongly to their new owners. The other trait, noted by Jo-Rosie, is that the stray dogs in particular are often good problem solvers owing to their need to survive on the streets.

Nando and Jo-Rosie keep in touch with those they helped in the show and I wonder who they are particularly proud of:

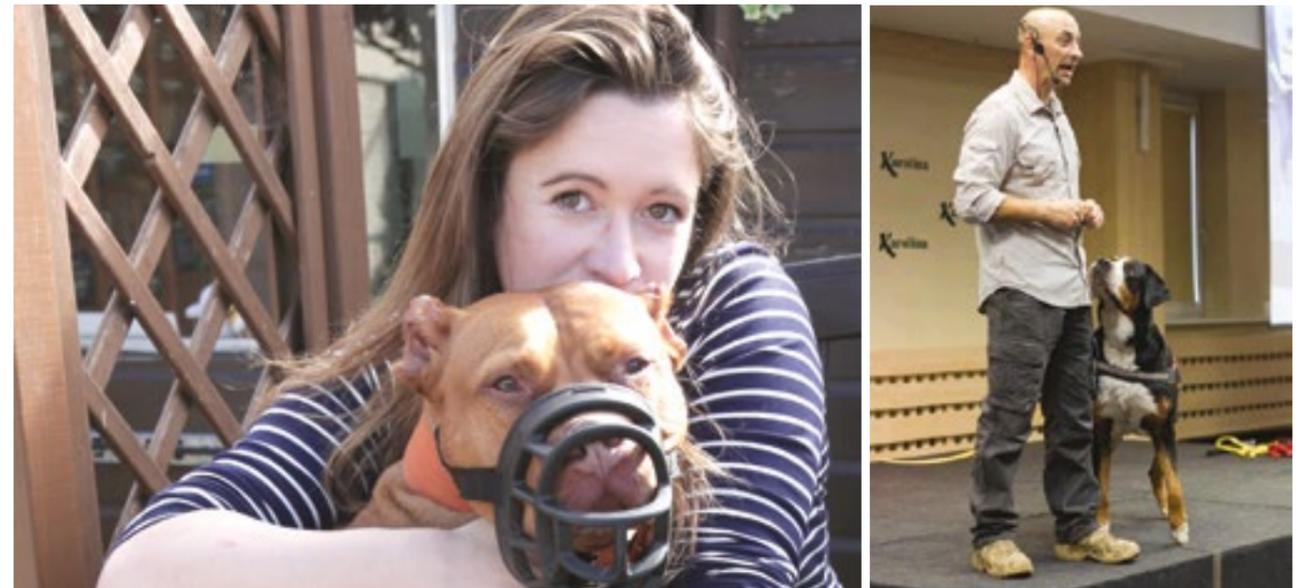
"They've all done so well but I guess we were amazed by Indie, the German Shepherd and her owner Paula. That dog was a yard dog and afraid of the outside world once out on the streets. Paula needed her to help her go out as she had been a victim of a hate crime and was scared of going out in her wheelchair alone. Through so much hard work, largely because of how much Paula has done with her, she transformed into this amazing assistance dog and now goes everywhere with her."

Since the programme aired in June the couple have been inundated with requests for help. More than 300 people, who have either been refused assistance dogs or are on very long waiting lists, have been asking for a dog of their own.

In response to this great demand Jo-Rosie and Nando have founded The School of Canine Science, to run a brand new course to help rescues select and train dogs for others.

Nando says: "I think it's been underestimated what kind of help some people need and what rescue dogs could do. Take Emily from the programme who has narcolepsy. She told us that one day when she collapsed on the street, four ambulances were called to help her. Now she's got Poppy, if she does collapse, Poppy stays by her side, and that very action of her staying calm and close to her, is a signal to people that Emily is OK."

The couple's paths to becoming trainers are different. Jo-Rosie studied human psychology before turning her attention to animals, working for three years at a London animal hospital while continuing her animal behaviourist studies. As her experience grew so began an interest in the legal side of dog



ownership, and she has since become an expert witness, working on dangerous dog cases both for the Crown Prosecution Service and dog owners.

Jo-Rosie has been on the other side of the courtroom too, as the owner of registered Pitbull Terrier, Archie. Found wandering the streets of London with his ears cut off, and so skinny staff at the rescue mistakenly thought he was a lurcher on first inspection, Archie has become a mascot for the breed and emblem for the campaign against breed specific legislation. Archie is an example of the Pit Bull's true strength as a working dog. He has done scent work with the World Scent Dog Association, is trick trained, and you'll spot him in the opening scenes of *Rescue Dog to Super Dog*, carrying out some household chores.

With 2016 marking the 20 year anniversary of the Dangerous Dogs Act, I wonder what it's like owning a breed that is so vilified?

"It's very difficult. Archie doesn't like the muzzle although he has to wear it as a requirement of his exempted status," says Jo-Rosie. "You become quite paranoid about him being out in public spaces because if he were to slip the muzzle or escape he could be caught and put to sleep. I've been shouted at a few times when I'm out with him too."

On the flip side Jo-Rosie is quick to point out that there are many people out there who are supportive of Archie's predicament and understand the complexity of the issue. While the trainer would argue, like so many other people working in the "dangerous dogs" arena, that specific legislation doesn't work and has not improved public safety, she and Nando are not convinced a complete removal of the ban is the way forward.

Nando jumps in: "We think there needs to be a balance. We don't want to see a change in the law around breeds if it means people view every breed through rose tinted spectacles. Pitbulls are not dogs that are suitable for a lot of people's lifestyles. They are working dogs, like border collies, and need lots of mental stimulation. We wish an organisation like the Kennel Club would acknowledge a standard on temperament for every breed and then give people a more clear indication as to which dogs are more likely to be aggressive."

Like Jo-Rosie, Nando has had a long career in training and behaviour, working with a wealth of recognised names like Ian Dunbar, Steve Mann and Sarah Whitehead. He set up a training school in Spain before he and his dogs moved back to the UK to live with Jo-Rosie.

The couple are proud owners of four dogs – aside from Archie there is Fizz (Mallinos) Ella (Vizla) and Zeus (Doberman).

There will be a new addition to the family at the end of the year when their first child is born. I wonder how they are preparing their dogs for this life-changing event.

Jo-Rosie explains: "It's a very gradual process and we're doing lots of different things. We've started playing baby noises so that they get used to the sounds. The dogs love long walks, but obviously I won't be doing as many of those when the baby comes along, so we've been reducing that time."

"We've already got some puppy pens set out in the house too so that there are defined areas where the baby will be, and where the dogs will be – so that the dogs and baby are very comfortable together."

With 2016 seeing a new baby, new training school and a hit TV programme, I wonder if another series of *Rescue Dog to Super Dog* is on the cards for next year? Nando nods and Jo-Rosie says nothing. Well if it does happen, I for one will be tuning in.



You can watch *Rescue Dog to Super Dog* on catch up at Channel 4.

For more details about the training opportunities, please visit www.schoolofcaninescience.co.uk