

## Tails to Tell



Most of our "Tails to Tell" feature stories about rescued and rehomed cats, although we have featured stories of sick or injured dogs helped by our welfare assistance scheme which provides owners on low incomes with financial help towards vet bills, including free neutering and microchipping. So this time it is good to be able to bring you a success story of a rescued and rehomed dog.

As part of our welfare work, we support Hart District Council's Dog Warden services by paying for the neutering of any stray dogs that they end up dealing with. If the dog isn't microchipped and no owner can be found within 7 days the pet is neutered (if not already) and microchipped and then passed on to animal charities for rehoming. Sadly, thousands of dogs each year that are picked up by local Councils aren't "lost" but have been deliberately abandoned.

This is the story of one of those abandonments. In late January, Hart District Council's Dog Warden received a call regarding a report of a dog that had been tied to a post near a duck pond in Hartley Wintney. When Jazmine, an apprentice Dog Warden and Amy, a colleague, arrived they found a brown and white Borzoi Lurcher. He was young, very underweight, in poor condition and clearly in a lot of distress, straining at the end of the rope. He was taken back to Fleet's Council Offices, scanned for a microchip but

one wasn't present. All the usual steps were taken to advertise him "found" but no one came forward to claim him. It wasn't long before the staff nicknamed him "Cookie" due to a certain overwhelming love of eating biscuits! He spent the next 7 days in kennels (the legal amount of time that must be given for an owner to come forward before any action can be taken).

At the end of the 7 days, Hart contacted our Welfare Assistance Secretary, Pat, who issues the neutering vouchers for their stray dogs to request a voucher for Cookie. When Pat learned of Cookie and his by then apparent behavioural issues, she immediately thought of someone she knew who was getting over the sad loss of one of her dogs and was thinking about getting another.

It struck Pat that Sarah, a very experienced vet nurse and pet owner, would offer Cookie the type of home and care that he clearly needed, so as luck would have it, Cookie had a new home to go to straight away!

This particular point was of importance as it was obvious from the start that Cookie had most likely belonged to travellers as he displayed typical traveller dog behavioural issues. For example, travellers' dogs are usually kept outdoors all the time so sudden confinement within a home along with household noises are alien and can be stressful and frightening. They're often not fed well or regularly so have to learn to scavenge for food or steal it. Sometimes, it can be that they're not properly housetrained.

When Sarah took Cookie home, she was well aware of what was needed to address his behavioural and psychological problems and his physical condition. Initially it was about giving him lots of TLC and then the training to help him adjust to a family life where he would be treated kindly. As good fortune would have it

Cookie bonded almost immediately with Sarah, which was to stand her in good stead for the hard work ahead.

In order to find out how things have been in the 5 months since his rehoming we gave Sarah a call recently to find out how things have progressed.

Now called Joe, Sarah spoke about how he was just 'skin and bone' at the start, (*evident from the photo opposite taken when he was first picked up*); weighing only 16kg with no muscle development. The first few weeks at home were a nightmare – he suffered hugely with stress and anxiety separation. Sarah's nights consisted of sleeping on the sofa with Joe on the end of his lead with her holding on to it. Without this he was truly petrified; hyper-ventilating and frantic because he'd undoubtedly been used to spending his nights chained up outside. The idea of freedom to move around indoors was too much for him! Now Sarah reports they've got to the stage of him sleeping in his bed right next to her in the bedroom and not a lead in sight! To help combat some of the stress he wore a special collar that works by slowly releasing calming pheromones as well as a plug-in version for around the home.

To deal further with the separation anxiety, Sarah worked on curing this by leaving him in the house for just a few minutes to begin with. Indoors he'd be going frantic – jumping up at the window trying to see her; howling non-stop – it was heart-breaking to inflict it on him. But gradually the length of time she'd leave him for would increase and his anxiety gradually decrease when he learned she was always coming back. Now they're at the stage where she can go to work all day and he's fine, usually in the company of her other 3 dogs, BUT once Sarah is home that's it – he never lets her out of his sight. Where Sarah goes, so goes Joe!

Another problem from the start was his stealing to eat. Being half starved

and not knowing when the next meal was coming, he'd steal anything he could. Sarah said, "He'd steal even inedible things like plastic bags or if you left his lead on, he'd chew and eat the leather. He'd eat leaves in the garden and he even tried eating a wooden door frame". To deal with his need to gain weight, he was given several small but frequent meals a day so he learned that food was coming and he wouldn't have to wait long between meals but also having been half-starved his stomach couldn't have handled a big portion. Over time the portions got bigger and then meals less often so his weight is now 26kg and he's developed good muscle tone from all the exercising he gets. His walks to begin with were 10 minutes because he couldn't manage any more from the lack of strength and stamina so then it was a case of building up slowly to where they are today – with Sarah and her husband out for a walk, with all 4 of their dogs for 1½ hours every day. Joe runs everywhere, enjoys playing with his pals and the other dogs they meet along the way and happy to say hi to the owners he meets too!

Sarah says there's still more to do, but after 5 months of intensive work with him he's a completely different dog. He still needs to put on more weight and they are still working on a few issues but some may be with him for life, like the stealing, which he still does if he gets half a chance. Another trait that may never change is if either of them move an arm too suddenly near him he'll flinch and bare his teeth which are signs he was probably beaten in the past.



However, in summing up when asked, Sarah said; "He is the friendliest dog I have ever met. He's as sappy as anything and wants to please everybody all the time. There's not a nasty bone in his body so although he's had a hard start to his life, it hasn't affected him as a loving pet and we love him to bits".

## Loyalty Rewards at our Farnham charity shop



This new initiative, 'LOYALTY REWARDS' is aimed do just that – customers who show their **LOYALTY** to us when they buy regularly from our store will receive **REWARDS** in the form of credit to spend on whatever they choose. Launched on 12 May in our Farnham shop only, it is aimed at incentivising existing and new customers to shop with us and want to return frequently. In terms of the basic principles it's quite straightforward and similar to the concept that most of us are aware of. Step into a coffee shop and the chances are you'll be able to collect "coffee bean" stamps on a loyalty card, which once full, will entitle you to a free cup of coffee.

Well our scheme involves customers collecting "paw-print" stamps on their loyalty cards, and when their card is full – only ten to collect – they'll receive a £5 money-off voucher to spend in-store. Terms do apply but the main two are customers need to spend a minimum of £5 in one transaction in order to gain a "paw-print" stamp on their card and when it comes to the £5 voucher to spend, it is only redeemable against stock that's been donated to us. However, on the basis that 98% of the shop's stock is donated, there's very little that customers won't be able to redeem their £5 voucher against.

Although it's early days, our Managers report that the scheme has been enthusiastically received by ALL customers and within the first week they had handed out their first £5 voucher!!

One of our Managers said, "The customers seem to enjoy looking around for that extra item to make £5 to get another "paw-print" and we've had a handful of people who have got more than one "paw-print" in a single transaction. It's definitely proving to be a great success!"

## Forthcoming events for your diary



### Branch Summer Family Fayre – 5<sup>th</sup> July

**Can you help to make this our biggest fundraiser of the year?**

We are putting everything into making it a great success.

Being a charity we don't have much money to spend on newspaper advertising so we are hoping you can help by spreading the word to friends, family and work colleagues and by donating any unwanted gifts for our tombolas, raffle, kiddies' stalls. If you are a local business can you donate stock or money-off/free vouchers for your services? Eg. as a hairdresser, a free 'wash & cut' or if a beautician, a manicure etc. Finally you can help by downloading posters or flyers from our website (available soon) to share around.

Any donations can be delivered to any of our shops (marked Summer Fayre) or call 07579 001459 or email [info@rspcahantsandsurreyborder.org.uk](mailto:info@rspcahantsandsurreyborder.org.uk) and we can collect.

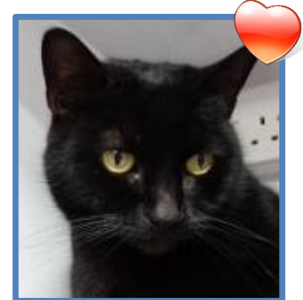
### RSPCA Week at Tesco

**Our volunteers will be outside Hook and Aldershot stores** from Friday 20<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> June collecting money but will gratefully receive cat & kitten food, treats, toys, or bedding for our rescue cats.

If you'd like to volunteer to do a 1 or 2 hour shift, please contact Joy on 07579 001459.

## Dolly needs a new home

Dolly, aged 7, has come from an unsettled background. Now after comfort eating too much, she is



on a strict diet and needs a home where she can get some outdoor exercise to help with the weight loss. She needs a quiet household with someone to encourage her gently and give her time to settle and where she can enjoy some stability in her life. We're sure she'll make an appreciative companion. If you are interested in adopting Dolly, please call Geraldine on 07880 547502.