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# Press Release

## **UK Pet Shops urged to Put Rabbit Welfare First this Easter**

Make Mine Chocolate! Rabbit Welfare launches **Get Wise to Rabbit Welfare** campaign

The sad plight of many thousands of pet rabbits given up to rescue each year, often within a few short months after Easter, has been revealed by Make Mine Chocolate! UK in one of the largest UK-wide survey of rabbits entering rescue ever carried out.

“Around 60% of all rabbits entering rescue in the UK have been owned for less than a year” reported campaign spokesperson Jo Wills. “This just goes to show how ill-prepared for a long term commitment many owners are when they decide to get a rabbit.

With approximately 67,000 rabbits passing through rescues each year according to recent Rabbit Welfare Association figures, we estimate that around 42,000 rabbits annually have a home for less than a year before being given up to rescue. Clearly this is very wrong, and something has to change.”

The pet trade can do much to help improve rabbit welfare this Easter, and Make Mine Chocolate! is urging all pet retailers to join this years’ Easter Rabbit Sale Amnesty, and suspend the sale of rabbits during the Easter holidays.

“We are asking all pet shops to get involved this Easter, and we’ve already received a great deal of interest. However great or small an individual shops’ rabbit welfare activities are this Easter, the overall effect can be massive across the entire retail sector” said Jo.

The 2014 campaign message, ‘Get Wise to Rabbit Welfare’ is designed to help potential new owners learn about the needs of a pet rabbit before they commit to buy.

“Many new owners do not appreciate that rabbits don’t actually make a good pet for children, or appreciate that they can be very expensive to care for and need a carefully controlled diet and healthcare by a rabbit specialist vet. The point of purchase is often the

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last opportunity to educate before the rabbit is bought and then subject to a short life of misery, set free to face almost certain death, or given up to rescue”, continued Jo.

The Make Mine Chocolate! Rabbit Welfare campaign has put together a list key facts for potential new owners to consider before getting a rabbit:

- Rabbits can live for 10 or more years – it’s a long commitment, so be sure you can commit before you buy.
- Accommodation needs to be as big as possible – the MINIMUM is 6 x 2 x 2ft with a bigger attached run to meet welfare needs.
- Annual vaccinations against Viral Hemorrhagic Disease (VHD) and Myxomatosis are required.
- The annual cost keeping a pet rabbit can be £1000 or more.
- Rabbits are social animals and need a neutered rabbit companion for their emotional wellbeing.
- The main part of a rabbits diet a good quality hay, a few fresh vegetables and a very small amount of pellets.
- Rabbits should be neutered to prevent unwanted litters and health or behavioral issues; around 80% of females contract uterine cancer by the age of 4 if left un-speyed.
- Rabbits generally hate being cuddled or picked up – and holding them on their back is very stressful for them. They should NEVER be held by their ears!
- Rabbits love to be clean and their accommodation needs to be cleaned daily – whatever the weather!
- Going on holiday? Rabbits must have suitable daily holiday care – and just like catteries or kennels, this can be very expensive.
- Visit your local rescue for advice and to see some lovely bunnies needing a wonderful home!

Get in touch with Make Mine Chocolate! If you’d like to learn more about rabbits as pets. For further details: Website [www.MakeMineChocolate.org.uk](http://www.MakeMineChocolate.org.uk), email [info@makeminechocolate.org.uk](mailto:info@makeminechocolate.org.uk)

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