

January 20, 2022

Hop into the year of the rabbit by giving an unwanted bunny a new lease of life

RSPCA seeks more adopters as its animal centres are inundated with rabbits

The RSPCA is urging people to consider adopting rabbits as we mark the start of the Chinese New Year, designated the Year of the Rabbit.

The Lunar New Year, China's most important festival, starts on Sunday (January 22), with 2023 heralded as a year of prosperity and hope.

And staff at the animal charity's centres will be hoping that the hundreds of rabbits in their care looking for new homes will pique the interest of pet owners wanting to lavish their love and affection on a small animal.

The numbers of rabbits coming into the care of the RSPCA, like Buzz (*pictured*), has risen dramatically in recent years, while adoption rates have not kept up, leaving many bunnies stuck at centres waiting for new homes.



In the first half of last year (2022) there was a 49 per cent increase in the numbers of rabbits arriving in RSPCA centres compared to the same period in 2021. Some of the rise is attributed to pets acquired during lockdown being dumped by owners who have grown tired of them or are facing cost of living pressures, so they are - tragically - making hasty decisions to get rid of their pets.

[RSPCA Kent-North West Branch](#) recently took on seven rabbits who had been living in private boarding. Currently, across England and Wales, there are around 160 bunnies on the RSPCA's private boarding list waiting for spaces to clear at RSPCA centres - as the charity spends £26,000 per week on boarders due to capacity issues at their jam-packed centres.

Branch manager, Becky Blackmore, said: "We have just taken some of the rabbits on our private boarding list who had been waiting for space for over seven months in private accommodation that, nationally, will cost the RSPCA tens of thousands of pounds.



“Then there are the hundreds of rabbits who are filling up our regional and branch centres. We need more animal lovers to come forward to adopt our rabbits - people often don't realise that the RSPCA rehomes rabbits.

“I believe that we have more rabbits in our care awaiting homes than any other organisation in the country - so we really hope that Chinese New Year will help draw attention to some of the amazing rescue bunnies with the RSPCA.”

Owners who fail to neuter their rabbits are also believed to be contributing towards the rise in abandoned bunnies ending up in RSPCA care. Rabbits breed very quickly and owners can soon find they have more than they bargained for. The RSPCA can offer guidance on [how to sex their rabbits](#) so as to avoid unwanted litters.

RSPCA senior scientific officer Dr Jane Tyson, from the charity's companion animal welfare department, says prospective owners really need to do their research so that they will know the commitment they will have to make before taking on rabbits as pets.

“If owners do their research, then rabbits are simply amazing pets. The best way to give rabbits a loving new home is to give rescue bunnies a second chance of forever home happiness,” said Jane.

“Rescue animals from the RSPCA will be neutered, vaccinated and microchipped - and our specialist teams will work with new owners to ensure that it is a perfect match, and to help find successful pairs of rabbits too.

“The numbers of rabbits coming into our centres has increased dramatically and we have a real crisis on our hands. A lot of people will have perceived rabbits as good starter pets during the Covid lockdowns while looking for companionship or something to do. While many rabbits will have found great homes during that time, in some cases, sadly, the situation is different and the novelty wears off.

“As rabbits have a long life span, typically of between eight to 12 years, and complex needs, the cost of living crisis is only going to make things worse and we are bracing ourselves for more coming into our centres.”

The rabbit is considered the luckiest of the animals in the Chinese Zodiac, so perhaps these bunnies will prove the astrologists right and can find loving new owners very soon:

 Among the adorable rabbits needing new homes across the country are:

[Buzz](#), a placid Lionhead rabbit, who after being rescued from unsatisfactory conditions, has been cared for by the [RSPCA Kent-North West Branch](#) for the last two months. He loves being hand fed

and would love to live indoors, while he could do with a spayed female to keep him company.



[Blossom](#) arrived at the Kent-North West Branch a fortnight ago and is a friendly, inquisitive female Angora rabbit who has lived indoors. She has had a name change as her previous owner thought she was a male rabbit and had called her Casper. This highlights the problem of people incorrectly sexing rabbits. Because of her breed Blossom's coat will need a great deal of grooming and attention, so her new owners will have to invest some time on her. She needs a neutered male to live with.



Mother and daughter duo [Meimei and Gigi](#) are [RSPCA Crewe, Nantwich and District Branch](#)'s snow babies. Meimei is around three years old and Gigi, 18 months of age. The branch's volunteers say the pair love being outside, exploring and playing with their toys rather than being snuggled up in the warmth, even in the freezing temperatures of late.



[Gus and Muffin](#) are being rehomed by the [RSPCA Macclesfield, South East Cheshire and Buxton Branch](#) directly from their current home as their owner is moving house. Gus was adopted and bonded in 2018, but his partner died, so he was matched up with Muffin from another branch. They like to be close to each other and are friendly and curious.

[Luna and Harley](#) came into the care of [Llys Nini Animal Centre](#) near Swansea separately. Harley was rescued as a stray, whereas Luna was brought in from her previous owner after she had not got on with her sister rabbit. But the pair have bonded well together at Llys Nini and while neither are keen on being picked up they are said to love being fed dandelions and treats.



[Dennis](#) was rescued by one of our officers and is now being cared for at the [Birmingham Animal Centre](#). Staff say he is friendly, but a little timid. He likes his freedom and he is very clean, so he could be rehoused as a house bunny, although he would still need an outside run to allow him time in the great outdoors especially when the weather is nice. Dennis was neutered recently, so he could live with a neutered female

bunny for company.

Anyone looking to add a new rabbit to their family can check out the [RSPCA's Find a Pet](#) website, and adopt rather than shop. All these rabbits will need a large enclosure with an attached run so that they have plenty of space to run around and explore. Ideally, they will need to be rehomed with their friends or adopted into a family with an existing friendly rabbit.

The RSPCA also offers help to those people struggling to look after their rabbits because of the cost of living crisis, including these resources at their [new online Hub](#).



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Notes to editors

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