

PRESS RELEASE

8th March 2014

DOGS TRUST GIVE AWAY FREE PET INSURANCE FOR PUPPY PLAN GRADUATES

In continuation with an ongoing educational campaign about puppy socialisation and habituation by the breeder or early care-giver in the first 8 weeks of life, Dogs Trust Malta and the SPCA are now turning to the public to guide them on what to ask for when looking for a puppy. The Puppy Plan is a sixteen week socialisation and habituation plan that follows the puppies' natural physical and emotional development, exposing them to audio, visual, physical and social stimuli in a comprehensive, step-by-step and formalised way. The Puppy Plan is an initiative of Dogs Trust UK and The Kennel Club UK together with behaviourist and trainer Carolyn Menteith, that has been re-launched in the UK on the 12th of February of this year as part of the Assured Breeders Scheme (ABS) and has now been brought to Malta with the support of the Parliamentary Secretariat for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights, The Malta Kennel Club, The Malta National Canine Federation and all the dog shelters in Malta and Gozo.

Many, if not most, behaviour problems in dogs such as fear of visitors to the home, noise phobias, and separation anxiety, could have easily been prevented with the right socialisation in the first sixteen weeks. The Puppy Plan leaves little room for guess work for anyone raising a litter of puppies.

“It is very common for uninformed people to end up with puppies that are unhealthy, and very under-socialised and this often leads to breakdown of their relationship with their pets, making it easier to abandon or give away their dogs. We expect to see an improvement in the future of breeding practices in Malta, which coupled with our efforts to neuter dogs, should largely reduce the number of unwanted dogs”, says Sarah De Cesare Dunkerley, Head of Dogs Trust Malta.

After holding a series of seminars on the 13th of October last year and the 13th and 15th of February this year where breeders and canine carers were invited to learn about The Puppy Plan, the charities are now launching an offer enabling people who buy or adopt a puppy from responsible sources that have implemented the puppy socialisation plan to get one year free pet insurance from AllCare Insurance Ltd.

The Puppy Plan, along with new regulations on the breeding and sale of dogs, will bring a revolutionary change in breeding, selling and adoption practices of puppies in Malta. Proof of The Puppy Plan needs to be presented to Dogs Trust in the form of a journal, pictures and videos of the daily tasks in the first eight weeks of life, for new owners to be able to get their one year free insurance. People are encouraged to register their interest by contacting Dogs Trust before confirming the adoption or purchase of the puppy in order to avail themselves of the offer. The charity may be contacted on 777 111 00/21 421 500 or by email on office@dogstrustmalta.com. More information may be found on www.dogtrainingmadeeasy.org/the-puppy-plan.

The campaign officially launched on the 8th March, featuring puppy parties and demonstrations of both The Puppy Plan and clicker training, was officiated by the Hon Mr Roderick Galdes, MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights.

“We are welcoming this initiative with great enthusiasm. Hopefully this will be one measure to direct people away from puppy farms and backyard breeders, which often produce puppies with poor immunity, often already sick, genetically defective and unsocialised. Those are not only bad news for the owner buying the puppy but also for the puppy's health and welfare”, says the Hon. Mr. Roderick Galdes – MP.

Dogs Trust Malta will continue its efforts in educating the public through their school workshops and face to face contact with the general public. Dogs Trust's Education Officers have spoken to 41,000 children to date and continue to be active in that respect. They will also continue offering free neutering and microchipping to owned dogs to people on benefits, hunters and farmers alongside shelter dogs. The free neutering and chipping campaign has seen over 13,000 dogs neutered and microchipped for free since 2009.