pdsa

for pets in need of vets

News Release
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www.pdsa.org.uk

PDSA REASSURES ANXIOUS PET OWNERS OVER SWINE FLU

The UK's leading veterinary charity, PDSA, and the Pet Health Council has moved to reassure anxious pet owners about the possible effects of swine flu on our dogs and cats.

PDSA Senior veterinary Surgeon, Elaine Pendlebury, said: "Some pet owners are understandably concerned about the possible effects of swine flu on dogs and cats, particularly those living near farms and rural areas.

"We're pleased to report that at the moment there is no evidence that these pets can be affected by this new virus, so there's no need for alarm. The virus doesn't appear to be found in pigs in the UK, so there's no cause for concern over dogs and cats coming into contact with livestock or eating commercial pet food containing pork. However, because the virus could change or spread to animals from an infected person, pet owners should keep themselves updated on the development of this disease."

Although this current evidence is reassuring, PDSA has detailed plans for dealing with the effects of any disease outbreak, including swine flu, at its UK-wide network of PetAid hospitals and practices.

PDSA provides free veterinary care for the pets of people in need. The charity employs over 550 veterinary surgeons and nurses, and cares for more than 350,000 pet patients each year.

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors:

Leading veterinary charity, PDSA, provides **free veterinary care to the sick and injured pets** of people in need and **promotes responsible pet ownership**. The charity operates through a UK-wide network of 43 PetAid hospitals, 4 PetAid branches and some 349 contracted private practices (PetAid practices).

In 2008 PDSA launched its biggest ever pet health initiative, **Long Live Pets**, to ensure a healthy life for all pets. A key part of Long Live Pets is the introduction of '**Your Right Pet**', www.your-right-pet.org.uk, the charity's new online tool, designed to help prospective pet owners choose the right pet for their lifestyle.

In the last year PDSA PetAid hospitals and branches have **provided more than 1.8 million free treatments** and more than **200,000 preventive treatments**, such as vaccinations, neutering and microchipping. In addition, more than 36,000 pets are registered for PDSA-funded veterinary care through PetAid practices.

In 2009, delivery of PDSA PetAid services will **cost more than £50 million**. The charity is funded entirely by public support; mainly donations, gifts in wills and trading.

To be eligible for PDSA care, pet owners must be in receipt of either **housing benefit or council tax benefit** and live within the designated postcode catchment area of their local PDSA PetAid service.

Potential and existing clients can obtain more information on PDSA PetAid services by phoning 0800 731 2502 or by logging onto www.pdsa.org.uk.

PDSA operates **178 charity shops** UK-wide and is supported by **4,800 volunteers**.

The charity asks that it is referred to by its initials, PDSA, in all editorial rather than by its legal name *The People's Dispensary for Sick Animals*.

PDSA and PetAid are registered trademarks of PDSA.

For further information, interviews and photography, please contact Sally Wright in the PDSA Press Office on telephone 01952 204748 or email wright.sally@pdsa.org.uk

The Pet Health Council is a body of pet and human health experts. The aim of the organisation is to promote the health and welfare of animals in the interests of both pets and people. For further information on pet care and the benefits of pet ownership, please visit: www.pethealthcouncil.co.uk

Members of the Pet Health Council include:

- British Veterinary Association (BVA)
- Society of Companion Animal Studies (SCAS)
- National Office of Animal Health (NOAH)
- Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (APBC)
- Royal College of Nursing (RCN)
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society of GB (RPSGB)
- Pet Food Manufacturers' Association (PFMA)
- People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA)
- Pets As Therapy
- Pet Care Trust