



World Animal Day

– *be part of something special* 2003

World Animal Day (4 October) is being launched in the UK this year for the first time. In previous years animal sanctuaries and welfare groups in other countries around the world have taken the opportunity to raise funds, increase awareness of welfare issues and generally have a lot of fun!

Cheltenham-based welfare group Naturewatch has for some years been involved in sponsoring WAD events in Eastern Europe and became only too aware that animal-lovers in the UK were missing out on something rather special. For this reason Naturewatch has taken the unusual step of sponsoring a website www.worldanimalday.org.uk and inviting animal sanctuaries to hold their own promotional event on 4 October and advertise it free of charge on the site. As well as listing details of events, the site contains advice on setting up an event, ideas for fund-raisers, suggestions for involving schools, links to the websites of all organisations hosting events, a pledge board for individuals and endorsements from celebrities and key political figures who want this day to be a success.

To give a flavour of the sort of events that are going on, the Cetacean Research and Rescue Unit is having a simulated stranded whale rescue on Banff beach in Scotland, while down in Sussex Warnham Animal Sanctuary is having an open day, with donkey rides, tombola, and all sorts of other attractions – plus the opportunity for visitors to befriend their residents! Meanwhile in Dorset, Animals

Voice welfare trust have organised a pet blessing service at a local church. Schools are also getting involved in animal-related projects and organising fund-raisers for their favourite animal charities. Any organisation or individual that participates is being invited to provide a write-up of their event together with photographs for publication on the website after 4 October.

It's not too late to organise and advertise an event. If you work at a shelter, an open day can easily be made more exciting with a quick phone call to a local celebrity or MP to ask them to open the event, hiring fancy dress costumes for staff, having extras like raffles and tombolas. Or if you want to arrange a fund-raiser at short notice, an animal-themed pub quiz night or an evening of board games (e.g. £1 per entrant) take very little organisation. Have a look at the website for lots more ideas.

In Singapore they have WAD fairs, in Malta they have awareness days for children, and in Australia they have poster competitions. Let's try to make this a great day for all animals and animal-lovers in the UK – not just this year, but in years to come.



*In Lithuania in 2001, the President's dog was invited to open a new animal welfare centre.
Photograph: Naturewatch Foundation*



*Maltese children at a cat rescue stand at an animal awareness fair in 2002.
Photograph: Kenneth Cassar, Animal Rights Malta*