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Broadcaster Claire Byrne turns poster girl in support of SpayAware appeal



Broadcaster Claire Byrne has become the poster girl in support of an annual appeal calling on pet owners to play their part in ending Ireland's toll of unwanted cats and dogs.

Claire appears with her dog Rosie on the new poster for this year's SpayAware awareness campaign, which aims to reduce the country's high numbers of abandoned cats and dogs by persuading more owners to spay or neuter their pets. SpayAware highlights the issue through its website: www.SpayAware.ie

Claire joined fellow broadcaster and TV vet Pete Wedderburn for a photocall to launch this year's SpayAware appeal, an occasion they shared with several puppies and dogs from 340 animals recently rescued by the ISPCA following the closure of a puppy farm in Myshall, Co. Carlow.

The SpayAware posters are being circulated for display in hundreds of venues around the country, including veterinary clinics, pet stores, animal welfare charities, local authority offices and in community venues, where they are being put up by local volunteers. The posters form one element of a multi-faceted campaign that also includes a week-long series of radio ads on Newstalk FM, the SpayAware website and active social media.

Says Pete Wedderburn: "This year we are highlighting the message that while cats and dogs can't add, they do multiply. So it's vital that all pet owners play their part in preventing animal overpopulation by ensuring their cats and dogs are neutered or spayed. It's also much better for good pet health."

While figures released by the Department of the Environment over recent years have seen an overall decrease in the number of dogs destroyed in Irish pounds, many thousands of unwanted dogs continue to end up there. While no official figures are available for cats, based on anecdotal evidence it is estimated that the number of unwanted, abandoned and feral cats far exceeds the totals for dogs.

"While the decline in the number of dogs ending up in the pound system is heartening, there is no room for complacency. The best way individual owners can help end the plight of abandoned cats or dogs is to ensure their pets are neutered or spayed," says Pete.

SpayAware is supported by **Veterinary Ireland**, the **DoneDeal PetAware Project**, **Allianz**, the **ISPCA** and **Maxi Zoo**, as well as a range of well-known Irish animal welfare and rescue groups. For further information, visit: www.SpayAware.ie

ISPCA Chief Executive Officer, Dr Andrew Kelly says: "The SpayAware campaign is urging pet owners to act responsibly and neuter or spay their pets as early as possible to prevent unwanted litters of puppies and kittens. This is the best way to reduce the over production of dogs and cats, which is a significant problem in Ireland. Having your pet neutered or spayed can also bestow health benefits to your dog or cat. Don't wait until it's too late - get it done now. "

The DoneDeal PetAware Project is committed to creating meaningful change in the community through social, health, educational and environmental measures, and by investing in direct support services, research and advocacy for older people, adults, children and animals. Its PetAware Project promotes responsible pet ownership and advocates adoption of animals as a first choice over purchase.

According to DoneDeal's Customer Experience Manager Melrona Doyle, the PetAware Project is dedicated to promoting responsible pet ownership. A vital part of that is working towards the reduction of pet overpopulation in Ireland.

Commenting on this year's SpayAware campaign, she says: "SpayAware is a vital initiative that we are proud to support. The initiative has had a strong and positive impact on educating dog owners on the importance of spaying and neutering all pets. As one of Ireland's most popular websites, and a proud member of IPAAG, we feel it is imperative to support education and action to help decrease the number of unwanted pets and increase the number of pets in happy homes.

"Our goal is to make shelters, rescue centres and local authority pounds the first place potential pet owners turn to when looking for a new pet, ensuring that all healthy and rehomingable pets find loving homes, so working towards the reduction of pet overpopulation."

Darren Spoonley of Maxi Zoo Ireland adds: "We at Maxi Zoo are honoured to support the SpayAware campaign again this year. We hope that through our network of 16 stores, with another opening in June, and our loyal customer base, that we can help spread the word on how important responsible pet ownership is in reducing the number of unwanted pets."

For further information, visit:

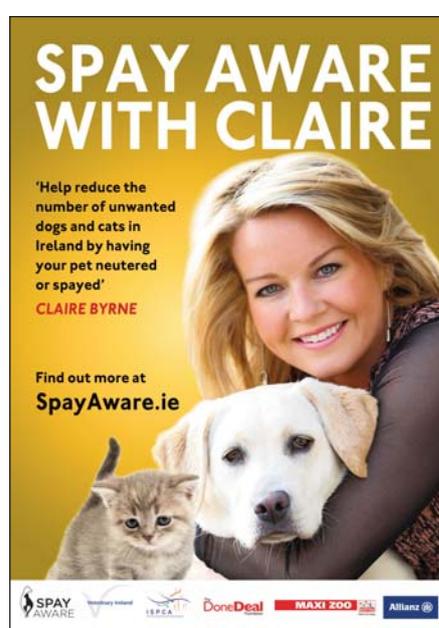
www.SpayAware.ie

www.lovemypet.ie

<http://help.doneddeal.ie/the-giving-back-section>

www.ispca.ie

www.maxizoo.ie



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For further press information contact Jan van Embden at CN Media. Email: jan@cnmedia.ie or call 087 6816511