

It hardly seems like any time ago at all that I was writing a newsletter to celebrate our first birthday. And yet it has been a whole year and now, on the 6th March, STAR is Two Years Old!!

Those of you who have stayed in touch with us, especially via the [blog](#), will already know that the last twelve months have been rather difficult for us personally and that this has inevitably had a big impact on what we could do as STAR. A series of events left us physically and emotionally exhausted and questioning the whole way STAR operates and whether we could carry on at all.

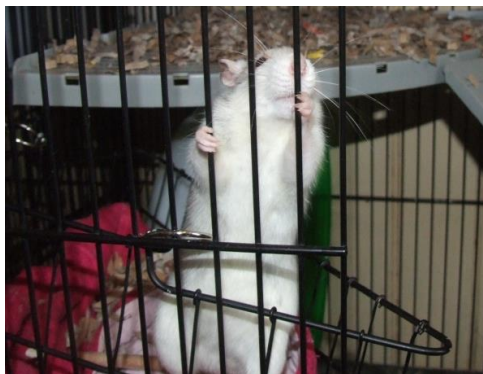
We were let down by a couple of previously trusted STAR supporters. Or more importantly our animals were let down by them. This left me hardly able to contemplate homing animals and totally distrusting my judgement.

On 31st March my Grandfather passed away after a lengthy struggle with heart failure.

And then, in August, Dave was diagnosed with cancer for the second time. He underwent a major operation in September, which left him totally out of action for the rest of the year. The good news is that they are confident they were able to remove everything, although we'll have definite confirmation of this in April when he has another scan.

So all of this meant a very reduced year in terms of activity for STAR. In fact between March and December we took in just 28 animals, although we were able to home 53.

While we were closed at the end of last year to concentrate on Dave we took some time to think about our future especially in light of the disappointments we had had. We decided to continue as we were with finding new homes for unwanted animals but to reduce numbers a little to allow us to spend more time with the animals and enjoy them more, and to concentrate our homing efforts locally to enable us to do personal home checks. We reopened officially on the 1st January and so far this year is going well with 28 animals admitted already and 16 starting new lives in new homes.



Pippa, who arrived in May and now lives happily with Posy

Thank you

We owe special thanks this year to those STAR supporters who really stepped up to help following Dave's diagnosis. Thank you so much to those of you who offered to help with the cleaning while Dave was in hospital and who fostered animals to take the pressure off. Thank you to all of you for your messages of support – they really meant an enormous amount.

A special thanks also goes to Peet and Christine for all their hard work in jazzing up the website. If you have visited you will have noticed how much better it looks now and it's much easier to keep updated now thanks to all their efforts.

And thank you as usual to all the people who have helped throughout the year by offering homes, making donations, doing home checks and helping to transport animals to their new homes.

Highs and Lows

As well as our personal trials, 2009 brought plenty of sad goodbyes to much loved STAR residents.

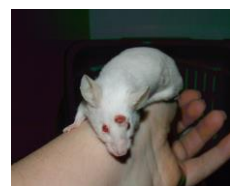
You might recall that in November 2008 we took in a large number of mice following a rescue operation to remove around 1000 mice from the home of a man with mental health issues in Wales. The mice had escaped from their cages and were breeding out of control throughout his house. As a result they were inbred and many had health issues. We ended up offering permanent sanctuary to a fair number of these mice who had tumours and other health problems. Inevitably this meant we had to make a lot of sad decisions during the year to send them on their way when they no longer had any quality of life. I wish I could tell you about them all as they were all so special in their individual ways but I'll stick to a couple who made a particular impact on us.



Super Gilly-bean

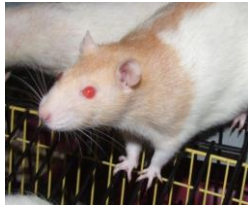
Gilly was one of the original mice who arrived in November. Within a few weeks she developed a mammary tumour and the vet confirmed our suspicion that removing it would not be in her best interests and all we could do was make her comfortable for whatever time she had left. Well that turned out to be another three months as Gilly was not a mouse to give up easily. Her lump became huge but she still carried on, never letting it slow her down. We took her back to the vets just to check that they agreed with keeping her going with such a large tumour and they agreed that she wasn't ready to give up yet. Finally on the 11th March we felt that she was ready and dear Rob at Seers Croft Veterinary Surgery waited past his scheduled finishing time in order to be the one to help her pass since he had been her vet throughout.

A year after the original intake, a rescue that had taken in some of the mice closed down. We took in some of the mice who had health issues and needed a sanctuary place. Amongst them was Echo who had a skin growth commonly seen amongst these mice. Unusually though hers was right in the middle of her forehead. The growth began to irritate her and she started to scratch at it but its location made it impossible to remove.



Echo

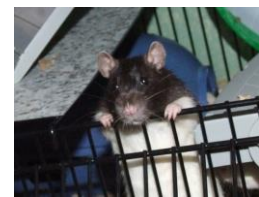
The growth became infected and inflamed and didn't respond to the treatment we tried. Eventually it started to impact on her quality of life even though the rest of her body was perfectly healthy. Having to let this remarkable little girl go when she was, in many ways, still so well was one of the hardest decisions I have ever had to make.



Edwina

We also said goodbye to STAR's first ever animal, Edwina the rat. We took her in from the pets at home adoption centre where she was sat alone and with a head tilt. Edwina blossomed into a large, chunky girl who was very confident and a bit bolshy although always good with other rats. She began to lose weight and in September it looked as though she might be suffering from a pituitary tumour. Medication gave her another month with us but then we had to say goodbye.

Of course, the year has also been packed full of happy endings, especially for many of the welsh mice. We have learnt a huge amount about mice this year especially males and found that boys can live together happily with a bit of work and especially if one or more of them are neutered. In the last year we were able to find homes for a dozen neutered male mice who would otherwise have had to spend their lives alone. All are now happily living with their own little harem or with another male.



Although I still have the scars from our time together, Martha (now Daisy) stole my heart big time

We were able to find homes for some of our longer stay animals including the last of the "trekkie" rats who were born here in April 2008 and my dear friends Rose and Martha, two unwanted and slightly challenging ratty girls.



Mr Squeaky Pants

We also recently had a first here at STAR – our first Guinea Pig! We had always wanted to be able to take guinea pigs in but we lack the space for them really. However, when we saw Roger advertised as needing a home on his own we couldn't bear the thought of him being condemned to live a solitary life unnecessarily. So Roger came home with us and is now going to be neutered so that he can have a lovely life with a harem all of his own.

The future

We are very much looking forward to the year ahead with a renewed purpose and a new way of operating, which is working much better for our animals and us. I'm sure this year will bring it challenges and sadness as usual but I know there will also be a lot of happiness.

As I write we have just heard that the man who caused the big welsh mouse rescue of 2008 has once again been allowed to get out of control with his pets. It is estimated that a further 600 mice need help. This is a real blow at a time when we have just a handful of mice left from the first rescue, mainly ones we are keeping through old age or health issues. We need to keep numbers here reasonable but of course we must do everything we can to help these poor mice.



Welsh boys enjoying their wheel

How you can help

As usual your help plays a vital role in our work. Here are just some of the ways in which you can help us.

- Perhaps you have room for another friend or two? If so, please have a look at the [rehoming pages](#) on the website and get in touch if you can help.
- We urgently need to make room for the mice who need rescuing from Wales. We currently have four cages housing mice who are not really suitable for homing but don't necessarily need to be here at STAR HQ. Would you consider becoming a long-term foster carer for some of these mice, giving them extra attention and allowing us to help more of the mice in Wales? STAR will cover your costs and offer any support that you need.
- Our new website has a [small shopping section](#). Here you'll find a small range of STAR merchandise as well as some treats for your furry friends, with all monies going towards helping STAR pay our costs.
- And if nothing there tickles your fancy, don't forget that you can raise money for STAR when you shop at hundreds of online shops. Just visit <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/starlighttrust>, register and select STAR as the organisation you wish to support. Use the links on the site when you shop at Amazon, PC World, Tesco and hundreds of other shops and a percentage is donated to STAR at no cost to you (in fact, often you'll save money on special deals).
- Become a fan on facebook! Doing so helps to spread the word about our work and recruit more supporters.



- And of course we always need donations. Our primary, almost our only, source of income are donations from adopters. Last year our income plummeted but our costs did not. Our vet bill is currently around £700 and it's only that low because we are paying off £100 a month out of our own savings. We desperately want to help more welsh mice but we're conscious that the care of the last batch cost us around £1000 in caging, bedding, vet bills and food. Many of the males are likely to need neutering at £35 a time. Any help you can give would be greatly appreciated whether a one off donation or maybe you can spare a small amount each month? You can use these buttons to donate via paypal or please contact us for other ways to donate

Use this button to make a single donation



Use these buttons to make a recurring, monthly donation



Update Request



Stilton and Claude, two neutered boys, now firm friends. It's pics like this that keep us going!

With everything that has gone on this last year, we've gotten rather behind on keeping in contact with you and your little furry charges. Some of you we're able to talk to regularly through facebook or animal forums, which is wonderful but there are others who we haven't been able to keep in touch with as much as we'd like. So if you've not given us an update on your adoptees in the last 6 months please, please drop us a line. We never stop caring about the animals we home and it gives us so much joy to hear about their new lives. Our new website has a [page](#) devoted to stories of our animals in their new homes - we'd love to feature your friends there too so do please get in touch ☺

And here's wishing you and your friends a happy, healthy 2010

Much Love

Sarah & Dave
Starlight Trust Animal Rescue