In the wild, wolf packs often roam territories of hundreds of miles.

At Wolf Country USA, 29 wolf dogs roamed a few feet behind fencing—for years, the only space their short chains would allow them.

On a half-acre lot at 81-year-old Werner Schuster's roadside attraction near Anchorage, Alaska, tourists paid $5 to “adopt a wolf dog for a day”—the facility’s way of skirting U.S. Department of Agriculture rules that govern the exhibition of animals for money. The fee gave visitors the chance to walk among the animals, and feed them cookies.

The Alaska legislature passed a law in 2002 banning the ownership of wolves and wolf dogs in the state (some animals may be grandfathered in under certain conditions; Schuster had not fulfilled them). Since then, a new form of DNA testing has made identification easier, leading to more prosecutions for illegal ownership. There has also been a series of cases involving owned wolf dogs who attacked or threatened someone—though Schuster’s dogs were not involved—according to Andrew Peterson, an assistant attorney general for Alaska who works on fish and game cases statewide.

These developments led state officials to take a closer look at Wolf Country USA, located in Palmer, about 40 miles north of Anchorage. The state executed a search warrant on Schuster’s property in June 2011, and determined that it had the right to seize his animals, but allowed Schuster to temporarily keep the wolf dogs on his property since the state had nowhere to house them. The wolf dogs were likely to be forfeited to the state and—with a court order from a judge—killed, since efforts to find alternate placement initially were fruitless, according to Peterson.
Lorin Lindner and her husband Matthew Simmons, co-founders of the Lockwood Animal Rescue Center, heard about the situation through contacts in the field. The pair’s 20-acre sanctuary, located about 75 miles northwest of Los Angeles, is largely devoted to providing care to wolves and wolf dogs. The sanctuary has four staff who participate in its Warriors and Wolves work/therapy program for veterans, helping care for the animals onsite. Cooperating with Peterson and Alaska law enforcement officials, Lindner and Simmons came up with a plan: They would have all the wolf dogs spayed and neutered, then transport them to their sanctuary to live.

They soon discovered that getting 29 wolf dogs from Alaska to California is no easy matter. They couldn’t find a suitable flight from Alaska to Los Angeles International Airport; any such flight would have required a layover in Seattle, and the animals would have had to remain in cargo; the team wouldn’t have had access to them until they arrived in L.A. 15 to 20 hours after leaving Alaska.

So Simmons drove a trailer to Bellingham, Wash., then flew to Seattle and on to Anchorage, where he met up with Lindner and five California veterinarians who had offered their services to spay and neuter the wolf dogs.

Meanwhile, the Alaska SPCA offered its box truck and several staff members to help three coyotes, three rescued German shepherds, and several of the couple’s own dogs. The rescue and transport was a costly effort. Simmons estimates the cost of spaying and neutering the wolf dogs, getting them back to the sanctuary, and building appropriate enclosures for them at around $185,000. Thankfully, they had some funding: Former game-show host and longtime animal activist Bob Barker donated $100,000 to the project, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) gave $43,000, and The HSUS provided a $5,000 grant.

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The Alaskan animals joined 16 wolf dogs Lindner and Simmons had previously rescued from around the country—plus three coyotes, three rescued German shepherds, and several of the couple’s own dogs. They now live in a series of large, securely fenced enclosures that occupy eight acres, including a 2½-acre area dubbed “Wolf Mansion.” Of the 29 wolf dogs transported to California, four have gone on to sanctuaries in Colorado and Washington state.

At first, the animals seemed overwhelmed by their new surroundings. But the couple has found it easy to bond with some of the wolf dogs, who are “very doggy. They want belly rubs, and they want to be totally petted up,” she says. Others in the group are more timid, owing to their wild genetics and lack of socialization. But, Lindner says, they’re adjusting to their new home—a home that allows them to behave a bit more like the animals they were meant to be.
Changing Perceptions in the Tar Heel State
Shelter director battles idea that pets are disposable

Leigh Casaus, director of the Randolph County Animal Shelter in North Carolina, says her proudest accomplishment is having opened her shelter to working more with rescue groups so that more animals’ lives can be saved.

In central North Carolina, the insurance business’ loss has been the animals’ gain.

Leigh Casaus says she grew up “out in the country” among cats, dogs, horses, and pigs (“You name it, I had it”) and developed a fondness for animals.

About a decade ago, when Casaus’s four children were all in middle or high school, she decided she was ready for a career. She got hired as an attendant at the Randolph County Animal Shelter, and after about a year was promoted to animal control officer—a seemingly ideal job for someone who says she loves moving around and being outdoors.

But after four years as an ACO, Casaus needed a break. “I was trying to rescue every animal that came down the line,” she says, “and honestly I was really burnt out.”

She took a job selling insurance, but recalls that one day after she tried to close a deal, her district manager pulled her aside and said, “You know, you really need to go back into the animal sheltering business, because that’s all you talked about.”

Casaus returned to work as an ACO, but a back injury from a car accident left her unable to withstand that job’s daily rigors. When a new position opened up—supervisor/director for both the Randolph County shelter and county animal control—she applied and got it, taking the reins at a shelter that can house about 100 dogs and 70 cats, and takes in 7,000 animals a year.

Kim Alboum, North Carolina state director for The HSUS, notes that Casaus and her husband even painted the shelter on their own time to help save money and buy more supplies. “That’s just the kind of person that she is,” Alboum says. “It’s not just about the animals and it’s not just about the community for Leigh. She’s trying to find a way to merge the two together, and educate.”

In the edited interview below, Casaus, 47, whose own pets include three Chihuahuas, a Manchester terrier, and two cats, talks to Animal Sheltering associate editor James Hettinger about her work.

Animal Sheltering: What’s your favorite part of your job?
Leigh Casaus: Always, working with the animals is the best part, but community outreach is probably my passion. Because when I started this job, there was a stigmatism: “The county shelter? Ewwwww. Yuck.” My goal has been to change that perception. We have a volunteer program now. We’ve opened the shelter up. We want the county citizens to know that this is your shelter. It’s for you as a county citizen, and if there’s things about it you don’t like, let us know what they are, and let’s work together as a county to change those things.

What’s going on in your community right now?
One of the things I’m excited about is that people are more aware of animal issues. When I started in this field 10 years ago, for the most part, people were like, “Yeah, it’s a stray animal, pick it up, get it off my property. I don’t care what happens after that.” And now, when we have to pick up a stray animal, people are asking, “What’s gonna happen to this animal? What are the chances for this animal?” I’m excited that the public at large is caring what’s going on.

Do you have any particular goals for the future?
I want to do more education with children in the community, because they’re the generation coming behind us, and things have got to change for our animals. As far as a more immediate goal, just stressing that pets are not disposable property. I get so aggravated when people come walking in our door [and say], “We lost our cat a week ago, so we’re here looking for a new one.” Don’t be looking for a new one. Look for your old one.

Is there any advice you’d give a young person thinking of getting into the field?
Take any vet tech classes or animal care programs that are offered at the community colleges. That’s always a good steppingstone. And just learn all you can about animal husbandry, and also be aware of what an explosive environment you can be in. … This can be an environment where you’re no one’s best friend. You’ve either taken an animal away from them because they weren’t good owners, or, in some cases, like a few minutes ago, I refused to adopt out to a lady. She has two in-heat females on her property, that are her dogs, that she can’t afford to get spayed, and she wants to adopt an unaltered male from me. So she hung up the phone cussin’ me.

For details of a remodeling project at the Randolph County shelter, see p. 14.
Kudos & Thank Yous

Working Together

In early January, Kern County Animal Control in California contacted The HSUS after discovering more than 200 animals languishing at a so-called rescue facility in Rosedale. The county ended up removing roughly 180 dogs, 12 cats, two horses, one pig, and ducks and chickens from the property—too many to house at the shelter. With help from the Bakersfield SPCA, The HSUS helped put together an emergency shelter at a local fairground, and sent a team to help with sheltering operations; The HSUS also paid for all veterinary supplies needed at the shelter. By the end of January, most of the dogs had been placed, and the county was able to take over.

In December 2011, The HSUS animal rescue team responded to a situation in Macon, Miss. A local rescue group had turned hoarder, and the county has no animal control or shelter. The Starkville Police Department Animal Control Unit, Waveland Animal Shelter, and Rankin County Sheriff’s Department all assisted on scene. The shelter medicine department of the veterinary school at Mississippi State also dispatched a team of volunteers to assist with assessment and medical care. The City of Macon provided a building for sheltering, and a follow-up meeting between the rescue teams and city and county officials resulted in veterinary students from Mississippi State holding a free spay-and-neuter clinic for the community. They got such a large response that they now plan to hold the clinics quarterly; currently there are 55 people on the waiting list for the next clinic.

In 2011, HSUS helped pass H.B. 1043, upgrading Texas state law on cockfighting. The new law makes it illegal to be a spectator at a cockfight, breed the birds with the intent to fight them, possess the paraphernalia, allow your land to be used to host a cockfight, and take part in the earnings of a cockfight. The HSUS has been notifying law enforcement agencies and providing training throughout Texas—including at Houston Humane Society, San Antonio Animal Care Services, and Cameron County Animal Control—on how to identify and investigate a cockfighting case. The training has already paid off in enforcement of the new law in Galveston County and San Antonio. Enactment of H.B. 1043 provides law enforcement with the tools to crack down on this illegal activity and aligns Texas’s laws with neighboring states and most of the country.

Over the course of 2011, The HSUS animal rescue team assisted with the seizure of hundreds of animals from puppy mills, hoarders, and disaster situations, helping relocate them to temporary shelters for immediate veterinary care and then on to cooperating animal shelters and rescue groups around the country. These groups are part of the Emergency Placement Partners program at The HSUS, and without their help with transport, continued care, and placement, we would not be able to conduct a fraction of our work to help animals in these crisis situations. We want to thank all of our partners, but especially the year’s top 10 helpers: New Albany/Floyd County Animal Shelter (Indiana), Peggy Adams Animal Rescue League (Florida), Washington Animal Rescue League (Washington, D.C.), Norfolk SPCA (Virginia), Second Chance Animal Shelter (Massachusetts), Jacksonville Humane Society (Florida), Guilford County Animal Shelter (North Carolina), Dumb Friends League (Colorado), Nashville Humane Association (Tennessee), and the Lost Dog and Cat Foundation (Virginia).

We deeply appreciate the assistance of our many partners around the country. For more information, visit humansociety.org/espp.

Heads Up!

Looking for training but don’t have the cash to hit the road to a conference? Contact us about free webinars on whatever issues your agency or organization is struggling with; we can help with everything from disease control to customer service. All you need is an hour of time and access to the Web (trainings are provided remotely via WebEx)—we’ll do the rest! For more information, visit animalsheltering.org/shelterservices.

In 2010, The HSUS created the Pledge for Humane Discourse and Conduct Within Animal Welfare, asking everyone who cares about animals to commit to promoting compassion and respect, not just for the animals but for those who work tirelessly on their behalf. To date, more than 160 organizations and 300 individuals have pledged their support! This year, learn how to put the pledge into action with ideas for promoting compassion and respect, operating your organization at the highest standards, and communicating productively—visit animalsheltering.org/pledge to sign the Pledge and access these helpful tips.
The Beakly Standard

With all the purring, woofing visitors that shelters have to care for, adapting to the arrival of someone who chirps can ruffle the feathers of the most adaptive kennel manager. Many shelters opt to work with local bird rescues to handle their avian visitors, which is a great option; good bird rescuers not only have the knowledge to care for particular species, they’ll have housing options that will improve upon what a crowded and hectic animal shelter can provide.

But for shelters that don’t have immediate access to an avian rescue partner, the best place to keep a bird is somewhere warm (65-85 degrees F is ideal) and away from the sounds of predatory animals like cats and dogs. Or as you might call this place, “not the shelter.”

Kidding! In all seriousness, consider an administrative office, an unused or low-traffic storage space, or your small-animal room. Caging should provide ample space for a bird to spread her wings, a variety of perches and food and water dishes, and enrichment items for any feathered friend who’s spending more than 24 hours with you. It’s smart to add items for avian care to your donation needs list so that you’ll have supplies around when birds come in.

Caging shouldn’t include wood (birds love to chew it and could make an escape route), or lead and zinc, which are toxic to the animals, and should be cleaned regularly. Bird poop can become aerosolized, and some diseases can transfer between birds and humans, so staff may want to wear surgical masks while cleaning and should definitely wash their hands before and after.

Make sure adopters know the animals are there! Include them in your adoption listings, and mention them regularly on your social media platforms (especially, er, Twitter). And if they’re kept in a less visible area of the shelter, make sure to have signage letting visitors know they’re there. You could even make a paper trail of birds “flying” along the wall leading people to their housing.

With all the possible birds you could get in—parakeets, cockatiels, and canaries are common, but larger parrots are unfortunately still in the pet trade as well—you’ll want to make sure you’ve got care, feeding, and health information that’s species-specific. Captive Exotic Bird Care: A Guide for Shelters is a terrific resource from the Avian Welfare Coalition; the group also maintains a working list of bird rescue groups organized by state. Go to avianwelfare.org to check them out, and find more bird resources at animalsheltering.org.

It’s a good idea to add items for avian care and enrichment to your donation needs list, so that you’ll be ready with the appropriate supplies when feathered visitors arrive at your shelter.

We’ve opened the Mouthpieces department to reader submissions! Many shelters and rescues have produced fantastic public service announcements. If you’ve created one you’d like to share, please submit it to us. We’ll use some of the best ones in the magazine.

The small print: Submitted PSAs can retain your organizational branding, but you must be OK with allowing other groups to add their contact info so that they’ll be able to use the ad in their own communities.

The technical stuff: Our preferred file format is PDF/X-1a:2001 with crop marks at least .125 inches from artwork. Accepted alternate file formats are QuarkXPress, InDesign, Illustrator, or Photoshop. If an ad is submitted in a format other than PDF, graphics and fonts must be included — images must be CMYK and 300 dpi. Line art must be at least 600 dpi. The dimensions must be (or must be adjustable to) full page including bleed: 8.375 inches by 10.75 inches; live area/non bleed: 7.125 inches by 9.5 inches.

To download this and prior Mouthpieces to use, go to animalsheltering.org/mouthpieces. To submit a PSA, please contact us at asm@humanesociety.org.
A adopters are our heroes.

You may not be wearing a cape or shiny red boots. But you’ve come here to help us save a life.

To us, that’s cooler than leaping tall buildings in a single bound.

Sometimes, though, heroes need a little help. After all, even Batman had Robin.

Getting to know your new pet will take time and patience, so call us if you have any questions or concerns about your new adopted friend. Whether it’s a question about litter boxes or crate training, we’ve got the advice and resources that can help, right here in our utility belt.

You’ve been there for them, and now we want to be here for you.
Dennis Tyler spends a lot of time at the dog track, but what he’s betting on is a happier outcome for the greyhounds who have run their last race.

As president of Greyhound Pets of America Central Florida (GPACF), Tyler helps find new homes for dogs who, due to age or injury, no longer qualify to race at a track.

His organization, which runs the adoption program at Melbourne Greyhound Park, evaluates the dogs’ fitness to become family pets, gets them spayed or neutered, then adopts them out either locally or by transporting them to partnering greyhound rescue groups in the United States and Canada.

Tyler and his wife Claire, who are both retirees from Kennedy Space Center, make the long-distance delivery runs themselves, driving a 22-compartment, stainless-steel trailer to such distant locales as New Jersey (21 hours) and Buffalo, N.Y. (23 hours). They typically don’t stop other than to refuel and drop off dogs with rescue groups along the way.

The drives are long, but the rewards are great: Since 1996, GPACF has helped move more than 7,200 greyhounds into homes.

Greyhound Pets of America is a nonprofit that’s neutral on dog racing—a business decried by many animal welfare advocates because, among other problems, the dogs are bred excessively and spend much of their lives in crates or pens.

The industry is waning; there once were more than 50 tracks nationwide, but now only 22 remain, Tyler says. Thirteen of those tracks are in Florida, but that number could decrease if the state legislature passes a bill—pending at press time—that would nix a state requirement that facilities offering other types of gambling also offer live greyhound racing.

The Tylers got hooked on greyhounds after acquiring an injured female racing dog from their next-door neighbor who worked at the track, and discovering that they’re “not the hyper race dog that everybody thinks they are,” Tyler says. They were struck by just how nice greyhounds are, and they learned about the greyhound surplus at the track. “We saw that there was a need,” Tyler says. “There [were] a lot of dogs that weren’t getting adopted out.”

Tyler got involved in GPACF in 1991 and became president in 1995. In 1996, the group became the official adoption agency at the Melbourne track. Track officials “asked if we
could move 70 dogs [a year], and I about fell out of my chair,” Tyler recalls. Florida is inundated with greyhounds, making local adopters tough to find.

Tyler recalls his first year as a “baptism of fire,” but the group learned about shipping greyhounds to other parts of the country, and managed to move 160 dogs. The adoption efforts grew from there. The following year, four kennels went out of business at the end of the racing season, and GPACF moved 509 dogs.

“The track manager used to ask me, ‘How you gonna move all them dogs?’ I said, ‘One dog at a time.’”

Tyler volunteers nearly full time for GPACF. “Every day you walk into all these kennels ... and you see all those faces and everything. That’s what keeps you going. They all need homes,” he says. There are about 9,000 dogs racing in Florida, and on any given day there are probably 400 or 500 who need homes, according to Tyler.

Tyler sometimes visits other tracks in Florida with a “shopping list” from the rescue groups he works with—one might want a female, brindle greyhound who’s good with children and cats, for example. “There’s some dogs that we’re looking for, some dogs that we need, and then we’ll see dogs that need us—one with a broken leg, one with no hair on their back, one that has some kind of a medical problem,” Tyler says. “And we say, ‘We’ll take that one, too.’” A broken leg can cost $1,200 to repair, but GPACF has beefed up its fundraising over the years to cover such expenses.

The dogs he’s helped save aren’t shy about expressing their gratitude, even years after their rescue.

When Tyler visits the annual picnic fundraiser held by GPA’s Maryland chapter to showcase dogs enjoying life after racing, greyhounds “will drag their owners across this huge park,” says Ethel Whitehurst, the group’s president. “They catch sight of him, and they’re pulling and pulling ... and they remember him, and they whimper. When they get to him, they just go nuts.”

“That’s really the payoff. They do remember you,” Tyler says. “… At least one time [the group gave me] a shirt, and by the end of the day I had paw prints all over it.”

For more information about Greyhound Pets of America Central Florida, visit floridagreyhounds.com.

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Ryan Architects, served as the project’s design consultant. “Everything was very much about showcasing the animals … with the best lighting and the best colors and the best graphics, and everything that made it feel like a retail experience,” Hinojosa says.

Some animal shelters suffer from lousy locations. It’s safe to say the SPCA of Texas’s new home will never have that problem. The facility, which fronts Interstate 30 in Dallas, has a commanding presence. “There are these three big walls that go up about 60 feet that have ‘SPCA’ in neon lights, so when you go by at night, you don’t miss it. The building is terra cotta and purple, so it kind of stands out from all the rest in the community,” says James Bias, president. The facility features a fully equipped medical wing and surgery suite to care for injured animals and to provide spay/neuter and wellness services to both shelter animals and owned pets; playrooms and outdoor green spaces where visitors can connect with adoptable pets; and classrooms for humane education programs and volunteer training.

The 75,000-square-foot building already housed the SPCA of Texas’s public call center, its rescue and investigations team, and administrative offices, and replaces the 40-year-old Dealey Animal Care Center near downtown. The SPCA of Texas bought the building in 2006, and started construction to expand the footprint and renovate existing space in 2010. Total cost of the project was about $15 million. Hinojosa Architecture & Interiors of Dallas was hired to design the interior and exterior spaces; Martha Seng, a principal with Houston-based Jackson & Ryan Architects, served as the project’s design consultant. “Everything was very much about showcasing the animals … with the best lighting and the best colors … with the best graphics, and everything that made it feel like a retail experience,” Hinojosa says.

A recent renovation at the Randolph County Animal Shelter in North Carolina created a more customer-friendly reception area. Randolph County Animal Shelter in Randleman, N.C., got a much-needed facelift in January, thanks to a pair of $3,000 grants from The HSUS and the ASPCA. Before the project, the shelter didn’t have much of a reception area—there was just room for a staff member and one visitor. “If it was raining, sometimes they were left standing out in the rain, because they just couldn’t get in the door,” supervisor Leigh Casaus says. To make the facility more accessible and inviting, walls were knocked out, and a reception space was created. The county’s maintenance department did much of the work. They didn’t hire an architect; Casaus just described what she wanted to a carpenter, who took it from there. Casaus and her husband George spent their evenings and weekends painting and doing some of the finishing work on a big, wraparound counter in the new reception room. “I’m hoping that when people feel that they’re welcome, that there’s a comfortable space for them, that they will be more inclined to come here to choose their next pet,” Casaus says.
Wanna Go Outside?

In December, Chicago Animal Care and Control opened its new Puppy Playgrounds—four fenced-in play yards where many of the shelter’s dogs can romp and play off leash to their hearts’ delight. For many years, volunteers took the dogs out for walks, says Cherie Travis, former executive director. “But if you can just get the dog out to a play area, and let the dog off leash, and let the dog run off some of that energy instead of dragging you around, it’s a lot more fun.” The play yards, which she likens to mini dog parks, also allow the dogs to interact with other pooches. Travis hopes that calmer dogs will make a better impression on potential adopters, leading to more pets finding homes. The play yards didn’t cost the city a dime—Travis pitched the idea to the Animal Farm Foundation in Dutchess County, N.Y., as a great project that would benefit the shelter’s dogs for a long time. The foundation provided a $25,000 grant, and Safe Humane Chicago—a local nonprofit that the organization has donated to in the past—got estimates and oversaw construction of the play yards. Shelter staff are working with Jeff Jenkins (former lead trainer with The HSUS’s Pets for Life Chicago) and others to develop play groups, and Travis envisions adding agility equipment to the yards “so it’s fun for the volunteers and fun for the dogs.”

A dog at Chicago Animal Care and Control’s shelter gets a workout in one of the shelter’s four new Puppy Playgrounds.
Fraternities aren’t just about beer-soaked parties and barbecues on game day.

OK, some frat guys are majoring in Budweiser. But the chapter of Sigma Phi Epsilon at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., counts raising money for good causes and volunteering in the community as core values.

In recent years, the fraternity chose a national HIV/AIDS fundraising and awareness campaign to benefit from the chapter’s annual week of philanthropic events.

But last fall, Kyle Campbell, a junior from Miami, Fla., who was serving as the fraternity’s vice president of programming, wanted to pick a local nonprofit, so brothers could actually see how they were making a difference.

So the longtime animal lover—“I’ve always had a pet, ranging from a dog to a chicken”—did a little research, and discov-
ered that the Washington Humane Society (WHS) had two shelters nearby. His brothers enthusiastically agreed to designate WHS as their new charity.

Campbell contacted the shelter to outline his plan for a series of activities during the fraternity’s Sweetheart Week, which enlists GW students—particularly those in the Greek system—to participate and fundraise for a worthy cause.

Sweetheart Week was held in November; the goal is for participating sororities to raise the most money, and thus become the fraternity’s “sweethearts.”

Each day brought a different activity. The kickoff was Paper for Puppies—“paper” meaning cash. Eight sororities set up tables and empty jars for donations; any bill dropped into a jar counted for 100 points, while any coin was a negative point. So sororities could undercut their competition by dropping coins in their jars—either way, it raised money for the shelter. The event brought in more than $500. (The donation jars were set out at subsequent events, so that people could continue contributing.)

The second day featured a lighthearted beauty pageant (hey, it’s still a frat), which included a contestant from each sorority; their houses paid an entrance fee for them to participate. The pageant featured an interview round, a pajama round, onstage talent, and a question round in which the women were asked about animals or WHS. The fraternity also organized a dance competition and a scavenger hunt in which items on the list related to animals—competitors had to take a picture in front of three of the various horse statues in the city, as well as bark at the statue of FDR’s dog at the FDR Memorial on the Washington Mall.

Jacquie Topping, WHS’s director of marketing and communications, served as a judge for both the beauty pageant and dance competition.

After one event at GW’s student center, Darcy Levit, WHS’s director of major gifts, gave a presentation on the shelter, which about 100 people attended. One student approached Levit afterward to ask if the shelter offers summer internships. Levit gave her a card, and the girl followed up. “So I think there’s going to be an extended relationship with GW. It really opened our eyes to what our local universities can be doing with us,” Levit says. AS

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Helping Cats Breathe Easier

Shelter cats commonly break with upper respiratory infections. Some shelters are now fighting the problem with nebulization therapy.

A nebulizer is a device that aerosolizes liquids to moisten and break up mucous and inflammatory cells clogging nasal passages and sinuses, allowing a cat’s own immune cells to attack pathogens. “When it’s being effective, you’ll start seeing some pretty productive cats, coughing up mucous and crusts and things that you hadn’t seen before,” notes veterinarian Michael Greenberg, a Maddie’s Shelter Medicine program fellow at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y.

It’s not practical or cost effective to nebulize all cats with URI, so a written protocol should be followed; shelter staff should be trained to use the nebulizer and to recognize the cases where therapy might help. “For example, if a cat exhibits a certain set of signs of a certain duration, then a cat would benefit from nebulization,” says Greenberg.

“The first time a cat is put in [a nebulization chamber], he should be watched pretty closely, at least for a couple of minutes, to make sure he’s not too stressed by it,” Greenberg notes. He recommends delivering 4-6 cc of saline in 10 minutes, ideally three times daily.

Greenberg uses only sterile 0.9 percent saline, aka normal saline or physiological saline, to nebulize cats. He never adds water, because it contains bacteria that could cause damage when nebulized, and water vapor in large quantity can damage the delicate cells of the respiratory tract. Because steroids suppress the immune system, and use of antibiotics can lead to resistance, Greenberg only occasionally uses antibiotics, and then only based on culture results.

To avoid showering the cat’s lungs with pathogens lurking in the chamber and nebulizer tubes, it’s critical to thoroughly clean and disinfect the equipment before each treatment. Nebulizers cost about $30, but you can probably get them donated. “As long as you follow guidelines regarding cleaning, it’s a very low-risk treatment with a potential benefit,” Greenberg says.

— Nancy Peterson
Cat Programs manager, The HSUS

For more information, check out sheltermedicine.vet.cornell.edu/shelter/NebulizationTherapy.cfm. To watch a video posted by Town Lake Animal Center in Austin on how to nebulize cats and kittens in foster care, go to youtube.com/watch?v=x61dYiFQ-Aw.

Play Time for Pitties

One of the biggest challenges shelters face is providing sufficient exercise for dogs. Leash walks, training, and yard time can be great, but well-designed play groups can be a wonderful addition. They offer the chance for multiple dogs to exercise and gain valuable social skills at the same time. Play groups can exhaust several dogs at once, which is more efficient and frees up staff for other tasks. Observing dogs at play can also provide valuable information that will aid in the adoption process.

Your behavior department staff should be involved in designing play groups. The better group supervisors understand body language and appropriate play, the more successful the groups will be. Supervising staff should discuss the dogs, their personalities, and how to best manage the yard/room. It should be clear who is in charge of the entrance where dogs will come and go, and one person should be in charge of deciding when a dog needs to be removed.

In the event dogs need to be separated or removed, be decisive and work as a team.

When setting up, gather tools that might be needed to separate or calm down any dogs—items such as deterrent spray, spray bottles, and shake cans are useful. Next, make a list of which dogs should be grouped together. Then designate an area and time and thoroughly check the area for toys, food, and chews to ensure nothing is present that may cause disputes.

The ideal environment for a play group is one without too many people watching or engaging in conversations; this can change the dynamic and affect the way dogs interact. You may need to use your voice to redirect dogs’ behavior, and if there is constant chatter, voices can become “white noise” the dogs tune out.

Watching dogs play is fun, and it can be tempting to get involved. But remember that group play time is for the dogs to exercise and learn from each other; you should stay in the background and observe. Allow ample opportunity for the dogs to teach each other what is appropriate; intervene only if a particular dog continues to antagonize others.

— Kenny Lamberti
Pets for Life Philadelphia manager, The HSUS
Junk in the Trunk

You know how they say pets look like their owners? Mostly they mean a fluffy hairdo or a long nose, but for some pairs it means a little extra baggage ... around the middle. And that’s not healthy for humans or animals. So weight-loss company Jenny Craig teamed up with Purina’s Project: Pet Slim Down, a reducing program for pets, to encourage pudgy people, pugs, and Persians to lose weight together with proper eating and exercise. From January through March 2012, owners who registered their pets on the Purina website received a free 30-day membership to Jenny Craig (excluding the cost of food). Because too-fast weight loss can be dangerous for pets, Project: Pet Slim Down helps owners and veterinarians work together to map out individualized programs; the site also offers a pet weight-loss reality series, online tracking tools, tips and reminders, ideas on how to exercise with your pet, and lots of other features that mirror weight-loss sites for people.

Card-iology

Feeling that existing pet sympathy cards just weren’t hitting the right note, Bari Mears of Phoenix, Ariz., decided to design her own two years ago. “Only an animal lover knows how it feels, and you don’t find the right cards out there,” says Mears. Her “Pawprints on the Heart” cards feature original sentiments by Mears and black-and-white portraits taken by photographer Susan Schmitz of pets adopted from shelters. Mears donates 25 percent of the proceeds to her other pet project, the Phoenix Animal Care Coalition 911 (PACC911), which she founded to help shelters and rescue groups. PACC911 sponsors adoption events and fundraisers for its 125 partner groups and maintains an emergency medical fund for the groups’ injured and ill animals. Mears has expanded her line, adding birthday, thank you, get well, love, and—her personal favorite—“congratulations on your adopted pet” cards. The cards are carried by several veterinarians and retail stores in the Phoenix area and have generated about $20,000 for the emergency medical fund. Mears hopes to increase exposure and volume to provide “a steady stream of income for the … fund which has saved so many lives.”
Lung Power

It’s not known exactly how many pets die in fires each year, but informal estimates put it in the tens of thousands, mostly due to smoke inhalation. Losing a pet this way is a tragedy for the owner and for firefighters who, without the right equipment, can do nothing to resuscitate an overcome animal. To help prevent these deaths, Invisible Fence Brand, makers of electronic boundary systems, set up Project Breathe to provide pet oxygen masks free of charge to fire departments throughout the U.S. and Canada. Since 2007, the project has donated more than 3,000 sets of small, medium, and large masks and is now teaming up with state veterinary medical associations that assist with outreach and train firefighters in how to approach and handle animals in a fire. “We know of about 80 pets who have been saved by firefighters using a mask that we donated,” says Laura Wright, the company’s director of marketing. “That’s always the most rewarding aspect of the program.” To read about another program donating masks, go to animalsheltering.org for our story on the Maine POM Project in March-April 2012’s “Better Know an ACO.”

Colonel Calico in the Backyard with a Litter Box

Ratted out by a parolee with a conscience, an Illinois man was arrested in January by FBI agents before he could carry out his plan to kidnap, extort, and murder a wealthy lawyer and pin the crime on the intended victim’s cat. The Associated Press reported that Brett Nash, desperate to keep his house out of foreclosure, cooked up a plot to abduct the attorney, force him to withdraw a large amount of money from a bank, then bump him off by putting him in a hot tub and tossing in a radio. He’d throw suspicion onto the cat by sprinkling kitty litter into the hot tub. Riiiiight. Has he not heard that cats hate water? Perhaps fearing that he’d be held responsible, the convicted killer Nash had attempted to recruit as an accomplice promptly reported the scheme to his parole officer, who informed the FBI.