

How does your organization handle naming adoptable animals? Who does it? Are any names forbidden? Do any names seem to have more appeal to adopters?

That was the question we asked you for this issue's Coffee Break, and you responded with a roll call of great names, some funny, some sweet. To see more of your answers—including a terrific one from Emily Abrahamson of KittyKind in New York, which we loved but couldn't fit!—go to animalsheltering.org/coffeebreak.



The foster parents name their foster kittens. Many use TV shows (Leonard, Sheldon and Penny from *The Big Bang Theory*), singing groups (John, Paul, George, and Ringo), movies (Butch and Sundance), a name that fits the cat (Bobby for a bobtail, Calli for calicos, Cinnamon for Siamese, Domino for black and white). Or they name them with a theme in mind: the French duo Babette and Pierre, presidential candidates Barack and Hillary, or football players Eli and Peyton Manning. ... We encourage people not to name them anything that would give someone a negative impression of the kitten (such as Crybaby for a kitten that meows a lot).

—Julie Bowen, volunteer
Friends of Jefferson Animal Shelter
Metairie, Louisiana

Several years ago we started assigning a letter of the alphabet to each month, so that all the animals that come in to the shelter on any given month have a name that starts with the same letter. This helps us to know right away approximately how long an animal has been with us, and it's fun too. There are websites dedicated to dog names. My favorite is dooziedog.com. I print the list and cross off all the undesirable names such as Kujo, Hurricane, and Fangs and the much-overused names such as Bella, Oreo, Lady, and King. We also retire the names of the animals who had to be euthanized for behavioral or health reasons (we are a no-kill shelter). Try it!

—Manon Fortier, vice president
Sullivan County SPCA
Rock Hill, New York

Naming cats is one of the few chances we get to be a little goofy in our work, so we run with it! Sometimes we go with themes—like types of cheese (Gouda, Velveeta, Dubliner, etc.) or cereals (Sugar Pops, Froot Loops, Lucky Charms, etc.)—for litters of kittens or large groups of cats. Much of the time the themes are food-related, but we did once name 52 cats from a hoarding situation after different types of fish and other sea creatures (Manta, Trout, Abalone, Snook, etc.). Sometimes a cat just “speaks” to us and says, “Hi, I’m George,” and that’s that—and sometimes we’re just feeling downright silly, and so we end up with names like Princess Prickle Paws, Gobbles, Fangus (who had his teeth pulled and is now Fangless!), or a litter of kittens called Measles, Mumps, and Rubella!

—Liz Pease, director of operations
Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society
Salisbury, Massachusetts

The staff here at MCAR really takes pride and enjoyment in picking out names for our animals. Sometimes we have themes with litters. Some of our favorites have been TV shows (*Friends*, *The Brady Bunch*, *Peanuts*, *Andy Griffith*, etc.) musicians (Lynyrd Skynyrd, Jim Morrison, Pink Floyd) and even Greek mythology. We try to keep a list of names handy that we get from baby- or pet-naming websites. We also keep a baby name book on hand. We like to name pets according to the time of year they are brought in. We like to use reindeer names at Christmas and names like Heart and Cupid near Valentine's Day. Sometimes if we are super-busy we grab the Yellow Pages or a newspaper and borrow names from there. We almost always give hound dogs country names like Conway, Banjo, Loretta, and our

favorite, Moonshine. We have learned that names like Angel, Sweetie, and Baby are just bad luck. They never live up to the expectations of those names!

—Amber Lowery, kennel technician
Mitchell County Animal Rescue
Spruce Pine, North Carolina

Because Indianapolis is obsessed with sports, we often name animals in conjunction with major sporting events. The Colts were undefeated for much of the season, and we have a litter of puppies named after key players (Peyton, Freeney, etc.)—they'll be adopted in no time at all! Our biggest fundraiser, Mutt Strut, is held at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway's world-famous track just before the Indy 500, so we've named dogs and cats after drivers, makes of cars, and other things associated with racing. We avoid using names associated with "bad" connotations (Cujo, Killer, Capone, Vick), and do our best to name the animals affectionately. ... With all our animals, we try to carefully consider their names to represent them in the best light.

—Tristan Schmid, director of communications and marketing
Humane Society of Indianapolis
Indianapolis, Indiana

I like to handle the animal and then pick a name that seems to fit his/her temperament. I prefer to choose names that people can pronounce with ease. I have gone to seminars where they say unique names help adoptions, but what I have found is unique, yes, but hard to pronounce, no. I like to keep track of the names used in a year, and I pay attention to the black dog who gets looked at first to see what kind of name he/she had. You would be surprised that some of the repetitive names we dread actually help the animal get adopted. People remember a pet they had as a child with a common name and are drawn to the animal with that name, like Shadow, Oreo, and Whiskers. We change names of animals who come in with undesirable names such as Killer and Cocaine. They quickly become Miller and Cain.

—Maggie Skovera, rescue/transfer coordinator
Countryside Humane Society
Racine, Wisconsin

One of the vets we work with suggested what we now call our "Veterinary Memorial Program." When a patient at his clinic dies, they send us the name/address of the owners, the name of the pet, and we send a card in the pet's honor, notifying them that the vet has made a donation to our facility in memory of their pet. We also send info on grief counseling and a note that tells them we're going to use their pet's name to name an animal in our shelter in the near future. This provides us with a fresh, new list of names to choose from—and we find some of the people go on our website to find the namesake of their pet, and find a new one to adopt! While some names seem to appeal to certain adopters, I think that is a very personal and unpredictable thing. We try to avoid recycling derogatory names.

—Monica Gates, operations manager
Humane Society of Waupaca County
Waupaca, Wisconsin

Name choices are all about connecting with potential adopters. We often choose themes for litters or groups of new animals, which spark interest when adopters recognize the reference or feel a connection with the theme. Examples include: sections of the orchestra (brass, strings, winds, drums) or Flintstone characters (Fred, Barney, Wilma, Betty). We've also done TV show characters, superheroes, herbs, presidents, months of the year, and reindeer. This helps us keep track of litters, and it often draws potential owners into considering a particular animal for another moment. Another easy source is a simple reference to the area where the animal was found—a street, subdivision, park, school, or forest can make for a recognizable name with local flavor. We also collect name suggestions from local elementary students. The students make lists of name suggestions, which are often imaginative and very unique!

—Katie Mehle, director of public relations and outreach
Pet Helpers
Charleston, South Carolina

Animal Sheltering congratulates Katie Mehle of Charleston, S.C., whose submission was selected in a random drawing from those published in this issue. Her organization, Pet Helpers, will receive a free coffee break: a \$50 gift certificate to a local coffee shop. "Bone" appetit!

How does your organization make its facilities more appealing to the public? Do you decorate your lobby? Deodorize your kennels? Disguise ugly parts of the building?

Please submit your responses (150 words or less) at animalsheltering.org/coffeebreak or send them to Editor, *Animal Sheltering*/HSUS, 2100 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20037. **Your answer may be printed in a future issue of *Animal Sheltering*.** If your response is chosen for publication, you will be entered into a drawing to win a **free coffee break (valued at \$50)** for your organization. Responses may be edited for length or clarity; no donation or purchase is necessary to win. See animalsheltering.org for contest rules, or send an e-mail or letter to the above addresses to request a printed copy.