The following two articles were submitted by people who work locally for animal welfare. One concerns the professional approach shelter employees should take toward their work; the other discusses some of the day-to-day feelings shelter workers experience.

Despite the variety of skills demanded from a shelter worker, want ads for such personnel often have as the only qualification the stipulation that the person "must LOVE working with animals." Volunteers who become involved with humane societies usually do so because they are, above all, animal lovers. Yet, anyone working for a shelter will have to be involved with human beings.

Shelters are not dealing with animal problems; they are dealing with people problems. Each animal that shows up at
Continued from page 1

the shelter's doorstep, or about which the shelter receives a call, is a problem caused by a human being. It will be the shelter worker's obligation to deal with that human being.

"Shelter psychology" comprises such old-fashioned values as the Golden Rule, common sense and the willingness to put oneself into the other person's shoes. There must be a continuous consciousness of the fact that one is always dealing with human emotions which run very high.

The most common complaint from the public about shelter workers is "rudeness" or "curtness" -- as when the shelter's secretary tells a caller that Rover isn't in and puts down the receiver forthwith. The caller will be very emotional, because Rover will probably never be in -- Rover, most likely, lies dead in the street somewhere. And therefore, how could anyone be so short and rude at a time like this?

Difficult as it may be, the thousandth inquiry about a lost pet must be answered with the same courtesy and compassion as if it were the first. At the other end of the line is, usually, a human being who is truly desperate. And even though Rover may never be found, a sympathetic voice and the promise to do what can possibly be done, the reassurance that "we'll call you the minute he comes in," can do wonders.

Depending on how a municipality handles disposal of dead animals, shelter workers may never see the bodies because they are taken directly to the disposal site. However, the shelter should try to obtain a list of the dead animals, location and time of the pickups, and other helpful information such as color and type of coat. Shelter personnel must not hesitate to pass this on to callers who report a pet lost within a reasonable vicinity of a DDA.

If you love animals, imagine that it is your pet about which you are receiving such news. This should temper your voice with compassion. And the last thing such an unfortunate owner needs is shelter personnel who build up false hopes, out of a misplaced sense of sympathy, and tell the owner that they know nothing, and that surely Rover will "show up pretty soon."

Even during "nuisance" calls, shelter workers must remember to remain polite. The little girl who rings the shelter three times within five minutes to report that a big dog lies dead in the street somewhere. And therefore, how could anyone be so short and rude at a time like this?

It is also difficult to face the owner who brings in a pet to have it "put to sleep." It is best to deal with the necessary paperwork as expediently as possible.

Try to remember how you felt about BIG dogs when you were only seven years old. The little girl who rings the shelter three times within five minutes to report that a big dog lies dead in the street somewhere. And therefore, how could anyone be so short and rude at a time like this?

Continued from page 1

... so

Subscription rate: six issues — $5.00 additional subscriptions to the same address — $4.00 each

HSUS Director of Animal Sheltering and Control Phyllis Wright Editor, SHELTER SENSE Susan Bury Stauffer

Rasmussen is a teacher who studied psychology in college. He is vice president of the Hutchinson (KS) Humane Welfare Association, Inc.

We work at an animal shelter

by Stella Furjanic
and Patricia Simmons

Furjanic and Simmons are employees of the Tallahassee-Leon (FL) Animal Shelter. This essay was written for and published in their local newspaper.

Most people think of it as the "pound" -- the place where we gas dogs. Even well-educated, open-minded people are under the impression that we enjoy the job. They feel we exist only to take their pets, to kill them. They think putting a dog or cat to sleep is the worst thing for the animal. They are wrong.

We do not work at a "pound" where we look forward each day to killing dogs and cats. We work at an animal shelter. Most people don't want to know what happens inside an animal shelter. The occupants were born into a society which has rendered them useless.

For those of you who have seen one of our trucks cruising the city streets, or who have read about us in the paper, or who are curious about how we survive the work we do...this short essay is for you.

We would like you to know what we see daily at the animal shelter. Your morning begins at 7:00 a.m. Upon walking into the kennels, you are greeted by 24 cages full of cats and kittens, crying because they are ready to eat. They are rubbing against the cages because they need some affection.

The dogs feel your presence and begin non-stop barking. When you enter their kennel area, they are jumping at the front door of the pens. They want to jump on you -- on each other -- they want out.

In the cage on the far side of the room sits a beautiful male shepherd. His owner says he's moving and can't take his dog with him. After five years of human companionship, he now sits alone in a cage showing signs of deep depression. He doesn't understand why he is here.

The dogs and puppies are let outside into a contained area so the staff can clean and disinfect the cages. In the back of the shelter, in an isolated room, are ten quarantine cages; pens for animals impounded for vicious personalities, wild dogs and bite cases. These dogs stay inside: the bite cases stay for rabies quarantine. They remain until their owners come to take them home -- if they show.

Four hours pass. The cleaning and feeding are done. The kennel master goes through the process tickets on file to determine whose time is up. The public begins to bring in animals, or to ask to look for a lost dog or find a kitten suitable as a house pet.

A young man brings in his female hound mix, a large tan dog. During the night one of his neighbors shot the dog. This owner felt his dog should be "free" to run. The shot grazed the front of her skull. Her face is grotesquely swollen, her features hidden in pain.

The owner lacks enough money for veterinary care. He thinks this is a shame because she was due to whelp soon. He wanted his children to witness the miracle of birth. Now he shields them from the miracle of death.

Today, over thirty animals are euthanized. Puppies found at the county dump, their bellies mushy from worms, their hair missing because of the mange, are included. Did the people who dumped them there really think they had a chance? Painless death will mean no more suffering for them.

They are no longer in the hands of irresponsible humans.

One animal to be killed is a happy, healthy puppy from Jefferson Street. Toni has become too attached, and she cannot kill him. Ben must take over -- but Toni does the same for Ben when it becomes too much for him.

Your day ends at 4:00 p.m. Two dogs and one cat were adopted. The animals left behind watch you gather your street clothes from the locker. They know you are leaving, but that you'll be back tomorrow. For many, you may be the only dependable person they have ever known to count on.

The plight of the barn cat

by Jean Townsend

Humane News, Humane Society of Harford Co., MD

There are three misconceptions which have prevailed about barn cats. The first is that cats are "independent" and can fend for themselves if they have shelter in a barn and some milk.

But to domesticate the cat, man had to foster genetic changes which produced tameness but deprived the cat of some of the instincts and traits it had as a wild animal. As a consequence, the cat is no longer as able to live without man's help.

While the barn cat population may double each spring, due to uncontrolled breeding, there are losses of up to 75% of the cat colony, accepted as "normal." In summer, many cats fall victim to farm accidents. In the winter, they die from malnutrition, disease and exposure. Mice may be in short supply, and milk is not an adequate diet. Feline distemper, once it becomes entrenched on a farm, will kill -- and continue to kill -- up to 90% of the susceptible cats.

The second misconception is that hunger stimulates cats to hunt. This seems logical for hunger stimulates a man to look for food. A cat's mind works differently.

Separate studies done by Paul Leyhausen, German behaviorist, David E. Davis of Johns Hopkins University and English researcher C.S. Elton showed that cats who were fed by their
Continued from page 5

 owners were just as eager to kill mice as hungry cats and, in fact, were more likely not to wander to other farms. Leyhausen's unfed cats ate an astonishing 10 to 12 mice daily. How many farms can supply even half that number daily to each of their cats?

The third misconception is that "farmers can always use more cats." The misinformed public frequently contributes to the farmer's dilemma, either by fostering entire litters of kittens on acquaintances who live on farms or by abandoning kittens and cats at the end of a farm lane. How can the farmers who wish to take good care of their cats do so with the public dumping an endless supply of cats on them?

There are efforts both farmers and the public can make to end the suffering of barn cats.

One: Feed them. The feed store that sells the farmer his "large" animal feed also carries an economical, balanced commercial dry cat food. A well-nourished cat, like an athlete, is better equipped to resist parasites and disease to withstand cold and dampness.

Two: Alter them. In the Davis study, four cats were able to control rats on a test farm. If farmers keep between four and eight barn cats, there is no reason why the cats cannot be altered to prevent uncontrolled breeding.

Three: Vaccinate them against distemper and rabies

Four: Socialize and protect them. "Easier said than done," say the farmers, "when we can't even catch them!" When the cat colony has to be reduced, farmers usually grab the ones they can catch and take them to the shelter. This means the tamest and friendliest are culled, the wildest get away.

Farmers would be better off to build a small colony of friendly, tame cats that can accept handling when they need to be vetted.

Five: Don't place kittens on farms. Some farmers will take whole litters. The farms that can't keep cats are usually places where disease or predators have killed off the cats. Kittens placed there will probably fare no better.

Six: Look for alternative methods of rodent control. Sacrificing cat after cat isn't the answer and some other way must be found. In the meantime, barn cat care must be upgraded dramatically.

Initially, proper care of barn cats will cost something. But cats save farmers a lot of money every year. They work for a living. Don't they deserve a wage for a day's work?

Humane Society of Harford County Director Warren Brodrick says that in his 50%-rural county, 30% of the cats coming into the shelter are barn cats turned in by farmers -- often 10 to 12 at a time, captured in crates or by any other means possible. He says many of the surplus animals simply end up being shot or succumbing to disease. Also, these cats become predators of rabbits, squirrels, game birds and song birds -- and Maryland law allows cats that are hunting to be shot. Brodrick says alternative methods of rodent control should be vigorously pursued.

The North Carolina Humane Federation, Inc., has launched a campaign to publicize the new North Carolina law against animal abandonment.

After surveying its membership on the priority of various animal issues, the Federation legislative committee determined that an anti-abandonment law had a good potential for passage. The group had the statute drafted by an attorney, and then researched local laws for anti-abandonment provisions. The state legislature did reduce the fine from the proposed $500 to $200 and decided against including a jail sentence in the punishment. However, the law has been passed, due to the background work by the Federation.

Acknowledging that enforcement will be difficult in a largely rural state, the Federation has now produced a kit of materials for use by local humane societies to publicize the existence of the new law as a deterrent measure.

The kit is $5 plus 50¢ for postage, and includes one poster master for copying, one flier master for copying, a sheet of sample radio public service announcements and five bumper stickers, with instructions for the use of all the items. The poster and flier masters and bumper stickers can also be purchased separately.

Federation officers believe the campaign will reduce the number of animals abandoned by making the public aware that abandonment is a state offense.

North Carolina Humane Federation, Inc., PO Box 892, Chapel Hill, NC 27514.
**Materials**

The California Veterinary Medical Association offers a 103-page catalogue "Caring for Our Animal Friends" which lists films, publications and other materials for humane education. The price is $5 for postage and handling. Complete information about its own education and information pamphlets, and a price list for these is available free. Their materials feature the film star pooch Benji and promote responsible pet ownership. Write CVMA, 1024 Country Club Dr., Moraga, CA 94556 -- tel. (415) 376-2020.

The National Association of Broadcasters offers one free copy of their booklet "If You Want Air Time," a handbook on working with local television stations. Two or more copies are 20¢ each. Write Judy Meehan, Publications Manager, NAB, 1771 N St., NW, Washington, DC 20036.

Ancom, an audio visual production company, offers a series of animal information films for use with the Ancom projector, which offers wall projection or TV-style viewing. For complete information on pricing and ordering, write Ancom, Box 81730, Lincoln, NE 68501.


Burns-Biotec Laboratories, Inc. has introduced a new vaccine for the disease commonly called "kennel cough." The vaccine is administered through the dog's nose, and the company says this means painless administration, faster immunity (five days) and no side effects. The vaccine is called Intra-Trac-I, and is available through your consulting veterinarian.

**SHELTER SENSE** has received information on two new publications on how to organize and run volunteer programs: "Standards and Guidelines for the Field of Volunteerism" is available for $4.00 per copy from the Association of Volunteer Bureaus, 801 N. Fairfax St., Washington, DC 20036. "Step by Step Management of the Volunteer Program in Agencies" is available for $4.00 per copy from the Volunteer Bureau of Bergen County, Inc., 389 Main St., Hackensack, NJ 07601. Both publications cover organizing programs, developing and retaining volunteers, recordkeeping, relationship with paid staff, and budgeting.

June is 9-Lives Adopt-A-Cat Month, and two kits of cat adoption materials are available free to animal shelters. One kit includes promotional mateflagS and a publicity guide for Adopt-A-Cat Month -- the other is a kit for cat adopters, including information, coupons and an adoption certificate from 9-Lives' Morris the Cat.

Send your name and title and the address and phone number of your shelter along with the number of owner kits you will need to 9-Lives Adopt-A-Cat Month, Suite 1400, 221 N. LaSalle St., Chicago, IL 60601.

This is the sixth year for Adopt-A-Cat Month, and last year an estimated 70,000 cats were adopted through the program sponsored by 9-Lives for the American Humane Association.

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**Animal professionals from around the country attended the opening Academy session in October.**

The Animal Control Academy will hold 100-hour courses for Animal Control Certification May 5-17 and again October 20- November 1. Plan now to include one of these courses in your 1980 schedule.

If you have already attended part of the sessions at The Academy, this is your opportunity to complete the program for certification.

The Humane Society in Oak Ridge, TN, has given the city $250 to send an animal control officer to the full 100-hour Academy program.

For complete information, contact Hatt "Bill" Smith, Director, The Animal Control Academy, 4831 Springhill Dr., Tuscaloosa, AL 35405, tel. (205) 553-8665.

Don't miss this opportunity to learn from other animal care and control professionals. Write for information today!

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**WANTED -- Fundraiser/resource person for humane society.** Requires experience in non-profit field. Send resume and handwritten cover letter to Jay Hill, Peninsula Humane Society, 12 Airport Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94401.

**WANTED -- Executive director for humane society about to assume animal control responsibility for county.** Requires experience in shelter management, public relations, fund raising and county contract negotiations. Excellent opportunity to build for the future. Send resume to Ray Koennmann, President, Harrison Co. Humane Society-SPCA, RR 9, Box 161, Gulfport, MS 39501.

**WANTED -- Assistant manager for Denver area shelter that serves as impoundment facility for Jefferson Co. Must have experience in sheltering and supervision of staff.** Starting salary $10,000 per year (probationary). Send resume and references by February 20 to Mrs. Corinne Clifford, Jefferson County Animal Shelter, 4105 Youngfield St., Golden, CO 80401.

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WISCONSIN FEDERATED HUMANE SOCIETIES now requires members to meet standards of operation by vote of the membership—standards drawn up for the 22 member sheltered societies cover recordkeeping, veterinary care for animals, sterilization requirements for adopted animals, shelter maintenance, and compliance with federal, state and local laws. Standards for unsheltered societies and education groups will be drawn up later.

Great Lakes Regional Director Sandy Rowland will assist with compliance inspections and with developing standards. WFHS will then form a committee for later compliance inspections. The group also hopes to write standards for municipal pounds and to incorporate the applicable standards into a state law for pet shops and kennels.

WFHS President Chuck Butts says the standards were designed to upgrade shelter animal care in the state by getting member societies to share information and help each other. He says WFHS will help societies meet the standards, including arranging exchanges of equipment and other services. (WFHS, Route 2, Box 86A, Jefferson, WI 53549)

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL CONTROL (11258 S. Garfield Ave., Downey, CA 90242) allows humane agents to sell dog licenses in the field. The agents deposit the money into an account at a bank branch convenient to them and mail the names and addresses of the license purchasers to the department, which sends out the licenses.

With a new computerized system, license renewal notices are sent out in the mail, and about 50% of the dog owners have been responding to the notice. Those who do not respond get a visit from an agent which involves a penalty fee of $5. Anyone who still does not comply receives a ticket.

Director Betty Denny Smith reports that the department handles about 160,000 licenses a year and that 85% of the owned dogs in the county are licensed.

The department has also opened a dog exercise area in cooperation with the County Department of Parks and Recreation. The facility helps city dwellers to take proper care of their pets by providing a controlled situation where dogs can run and exercise...

The next HSUS Animal Control Workshop -- "Solving Animal Problems in Your Community" -- will be held March 21-23 at the Granada Royale Homotel in Phoenix, AZ. The workshop will include presentations by HSUS staff and board members on shelter management, euthanasia, public education and cruelty investigations.

For complete details, contact The HSUS Rocky Mountain Regional Office, 1780 S. Bellaire St., Suite 103, Denver, CO 80222.

Another workshop will be held in Little Rock, AR, April 25-26. For further details, contact The HSUS Gulf States Regional Office, 5333 Everhart Rd., Bldg. A, Suite 209, Corpus Christi, TX 78411.

HUMANE EDUCATION ON WHEELS is the goal of the Humane Society of Utah with their new Pet Mobile, a van equipped with a counter and stocked with pamphlets, posters and other materials. The van stops at supermarkets and local special events to answer questions about the society, distribute literature, help with lost pets and sell ID tags. It cost $250 to convert the van for this purpose.

In its newsletter announcement about the Pet Mobile, the society asks readers to suggest locations and events where Pet Mobile can visit. HSU reports the van is becoming well known in the community. (Humane Society of Utah, PO Box 20222, 4613 South 4000 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84120)

A SHELTER SENSE READER HAS WRITTEN TO COMMENT on our article on "Winter Pet Care" (October, 1979). Diane Christianson of the Animal Care Occupations Section of the Dakota County (MN) Vocational Center reminds us that "a pound of dog food is not just a pound of dog food." Regarding our recommendation that dogs be fed one pound of food per day for 25 pounds of dog, she says that a 25-pound dog needs an average of 825 calories per day. She points out that canned food has 550 calories per pound, semi-moist foods have 1350 calories and dry foods have 1500 calories. Christianson also mentions that more active dogs will need more calories.

She says dry foods, while economical, are somewhat deficient in fatty acids, and suggests adding a teaspoon of corn oil to each pound of dry dog food. She also points out that since canned food is 75-80% moisture, providing an adequate water supply with dry food is a more economical way of ensuring the dog has enough moisture...
Continued from page 11

"SODDER DOOPER POOPER SCOOPERS" were featured in an issue of the Toronto Humane Society's newsletter "for people who care about how they look." Some of the designs available in pet stores were featured, but the article also included simple instructions for making your own scoop.

Cut both ends from a tin can and poke a plastic bag through, opening the edges of the bag around the rim of the can. When you drag the can along the ground, the bag is filled and can be quickly dropped into a trash can. (THS, 11 Wellesley St. West, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 1E9)...

NEW HAMPSHIRE SPCA (PO Box 196, Stratham, NH 03885) gives out a Pet Alert Card for concerned pet owners to carry with them. The card gives information about pets at home should anything happen to the owner...

NEW HAMPSHIRE SPCA
P.O.Box 196, Stratham, N.H. 03885
PET ALERT CARD

To Whom it May Concern:

If unable to return to my home for any reasons, please notify person or opposite side of this card to care for my pet.

PET ALERT

Name __________
City/State __________
Phone __________
Pet Name __________
Vaccination Date __________
Remarks __________

A Service of the New Hampshire SPCA

RUTLAND COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY (Stevens Rd., Pittsford, VT 05763) distributes a handy information card with the location of the shelter shown on a map on the back. The card also includes the shelter hours and membership details...

THERE ARE MANY AWARDS GIVEN FOR HEROIC DEEDS BY ANIMALS, reports the Gaines Dog Research Center, but now Gaines will present a certificate of honor to people who perform heroic acts which show "extraordinary concern and compassion resulting in the preservation of the life of a member of the canine species." A woman in Culpeper, VA, has been recognized by Gaines for rescuing a dog about to drown in a quarry. The certificate was presented at the Animal Shelter.

If you have a candidate for a Gaines certificate of honor, send complete details, including the name and address of the person who will present the certificate, to Gaines Dog Research Center, 250 North St., White Plains, NY 10625...

IN A FOLLOW-UP TO AN ITEM IN THE APRIL, 1979, SHELTER SENSE, the Orlando Humane Society (616 Barry St., Orlando, FL 32808) reports one of the benefits of having persons convicted of animal cruelty serve their sentences as shelter volunteers.

A man convicted of cruelty for shooting a neighbor's cat worked out his sentence as a volunteer, and his attitude was so changed that he wrote a letter to the editor of the local newspaper about the competence and dedication of the staff. The society had been criticized in another letter to the editor, and the new volunteer's letter was printed as a response...

PET REGISTRATION information is being sought by the Montgomery County Animal Rescue League, Inc. The group is compiling a list that will be sent to all licensed research facilities and kennel dealers in the country, through the US Department of Agriculture. The list will also be sent to humane organizations and animal shelters.

If you know of registration services, please send information to the League at 9620 Accord Dr., Potomac, MD 20854 or call (301)983-0922...

ANIMALS NEED YOU of West New York, NJ, issues Certificates of Merit to pet supply stores that do not sell dogs or cats, according to the Society for Animal Rights, Inc.

The certificate states in part: "The decision not to sell is based upon a moral concern for the welfare of animals, many of whom are bought on impulse by those unwilling and unable to provide them with responsible, protective care and a lifelong home. The humane alternative to buying a life is SAVING one by adopting a homeless pet -- available through animal care groups."

Sample copies of the certificate are available from Patty Jaymes, President, Animals Need You, Inc., PO Box 65, West New York, NJ 07093...

COLLECTING DOG TAGS HAS BECOME A HOBBY for Phil Arkow, education and publicity director for the Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region. Arkow would like to collect sample tags from around the country and invites anyone interested in sending or trading tags to contact him at the society at PO Box 187, 633 S. 8th St., Colorado Springs, CO 80901...

EXPERIENCED VOLUNTEER HELP IS AVAILABLE from the Retired Senior Volunteer Program in local communities, reports Lois D. Ambroser of the New York State Animal Control Association, Inc. Ambroser says retired older persons are helping out at shelters in New York State with good success.

RSVP is part of the federal volunteer ACTION program, and has nearly 700 offices throughout the country, according to the headquarters in Washington. The volunteers are age 60 and over.

If your shelter could benefit from experienced volunteers and you can help with transportation if necessary, check with your local RSVP project, listed in your telephone directory...
"LOVE 'EM, LICENSE 'EM, LEASH 'EM" is the slogan for the Oak Ridge Health Services dog control program (PO Box 1, Oak Ridge, TN 37830). Supervisor Jim Harless has the slogan with illustrations printed on T-shirts at a cost of $2.25 each and then sells them at $3.00 each to local community groups. Youth volunteers make badges with the slogan at a cost of about 21¢ each, and these are given free to tour groups and school children.

Oak Ridge animal control officers also give out free flea collars to citizens who obey the leash law, an activity that gained the department some coverage in the local newspaper. Harless says the slogan design has been used by other animal control facilities in Tennessee and helps focus public attention on dog control problems.

FINALLY, "DVM" - The News magazine of Veterinary Medicine" reports that a corporation formed by private veterinarians has been running the animal control program for Butte Co., CA, for part of a year.

The Animal Control and Health Services Corporation of Chico is believed to be the first group of private veterinarians contracting for animal control services in the country, and they are receiving inquiries from other municipalities.

Butte County, a 400-square mile rural county with 150,000 people, pays the veterinarian group $120,000 a year for licensing, rabies quarantine, impoundments and control of strays and other services. According to "DVM," the corporation is responding to more calls with fewer officers and less money than the county had previously used. However, the HSUS West Coast Regional Office reports that there is also a small humane society handling animal rescue work.

The firm has a total of 20 employees and six animal control trucks. They lease a shelter now but plan to build an animal control center, with a low-cost spay/neuter clinic.

In early March, Canadian and Norwegian seal clubbers will club to death an estimated 180,000 Harp seal pups and hooded seals on the ice floes off the coast of Newfoundland and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The pups' white coats will be taken to make fur products. These products cannot be imported into the US by law, but the hunt continues for other countries importing the furs, primarily Norway and West Germany.

If you agree that this is senseless, write your protests to these government officials:

Embassy of Canada:
The Hon. Peter M. Towe
1746 Mass. Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Embassy of Norway:
The Hon. Knut Hedemann
2720 34th Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

Embassy of West Germany:
The Hon. Peter Hermes
4645 Reservoir Road
Washington, D.C. 20007

Another seal hunt takes place in June in the Pribilof Islands in Alaska under an international treaty. Write your protest of this hunt to President Jimmy Carter and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, asking them to renegotiate the treaty to end the hunt.

The message above can be clipped out and reproduced in quantity by your local printer for you to distribute at schools, shopping centers, libraries and other community locations. Remember to add your organization's name, address, and telephone number in the space by typing, typesetting or affixing your group letterhead. You can also purchase advertising space in your local newspapers for the reproducible or use it in your organization's newsletter or magazine.
Visit your shelter on your next day off and instead of viewing it "from the inside" as an employee, look at it the way a visitor would -- "from the outside in."

Does the shelter parking lot provide enough spaces for the usual number of visitors? Are there signs telling the public what hours the shelter is open and where to find further assistance? Are the grounds well-groomed and the buildings in good repair? This is the first impression the public has of your facility and your program for animal control.

The traffic flow from the parking lot to the building should be convenient for visitors and, especially, comfortable for the animals -- for pets or litters being brought in and for pets being taken home. Make arrangements so that the animals do not interfere with your paperwork or owner education efforts.

Posters, signs and brochures in the lobby area should inform the visitor about responsible pet ownership, including your city and county regulations. Pet owners' visits to your shelter may be your only opportunity to educate them. Signs giving adoption and reclaim procedures will save staff the trouble of explaining these procedures for each visitor.

The office area should be set up so that records on shelter animals are easily accessible when a visitor inquires about them. Office personnel should be friendly and helpful in their attitude, both in person and on the telephone. Desks and files should be neat and tidy.

As you move into the kennel area, use your eyes, ears and nose to determine what the public sees, hears and smells. The cages should be clean with fresh water and wholesome food available, and the animals should be in good health. Walls and floors should be clean and brightly painted. Your care of the shelter animals provides the example and the standard for the public to follow.

Each member of your staff should take a fresh look at the shelter with the eyes of a first-time visitor -- then get together and discuss the changes that need to be made. Improving the overall appearance of your shelter will give the public a better impression -- and will give you greater pride in your place of work.