Your adoption program

by R. Dale Hylton

Hylton is an accreditation associate for The HSUS Accreditation Program (see page 4).

Your shelter's adoption policies should be formulated to assure the best level of care possible for the animals in your custody.

This responsibility does not end in the selection of an adopter who promises to provide a good home. It must include getting adequate evidence that the adopter has fulfilled the provisions of the adoption contract and the animal has adjusted to its new environment.

Here are some basic safeguards that you should use to achieve that goal:

1) Clear, concise adoption rules must be available on paper.
2) Your shelter must have interviewers who are capable of evaluating potential adopters and assisting them in selecting the right pet.
3) A personal reference should be required for all applications.
4) You should maintain an active blacklist with names of contract violators. No adoption should be approved without checking the blacklist.

5) The adoption contract must be legally binding (a cooperative attorney can help you work out the terms) with the following provisions:
   - The animal must not be sold or given away to any other person or agency.
   - The animal is never to be used for experimental purposes, for breeding or as a draft animal.
   - The animal must be returned to the shelter if the adopter can no longer care for it.
   - The animal remains the property of the shelter, and the shelter retains the right to confiscate it if the contract is violated.

6) You should set a standard adoption fee for each species. The adoption fees for purebred animals and mixed breeds should be the same, because these animals are to be adopted solely as pets, and mixed breeds offer as much pet potential as animals with pedigrees.

   All pedigree papers that come in with animals should be voided and sent to the American Kennel Club, 51 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10010. This prevents anyone from using those papers for another animal and notifies AKC that the particular animal will be sterilized and cannot be claimed as the parent of a future litter.

7) If you have a spay/neuter clinic, the pet should be sterilized before it leaves the shelter. For infant animals, a deposit must be collected to be returned on proof of surgery.

8) You should check each applicant’s home to verify the address and ensure the conditions are appropriate for the animal selected.

9) A regular and systematic follow-up system should be maintained to verify that the animal has been sterilized according to the contract.

   Follow-up can be by telephone, postal card or form letter, and can be performed by a volunteer. It should include several questions about the animal’s adaptation to its new home to verify that the adoption is successful. (This is also an opportunity for you to request an additional donation or to offer to add the adopter to your mailing list.)

10) You should be prepared to reclaim an animal if, even with the above safeguards, the adopter has not fulfilled the terms of the contract.

   If the case goes to court, a legal ruling in your favor will be useful in future cases of contract violation. If not, you will still have set an important precedent. In this way, you will put the public on notice that your shelter means business and will defend the rights of the adopted animals.

Many shelters ask people turning in pets to answer questions about the animal’s personality, training and background. Monterey County (CA) SPCA asks owners to select the adjectives that best describe their pets from a list including “easygoing,” “destructive,” “nervous,” “aloof” and “protective.”

Marin (CA) Humane Society asks such questions as: Is the dog allowed to beg at the table? Has the cat been trained to use a scratching post? Is the pet allowed to sit on all the furniture? This information is included in the animal’s file to give it a better chance of finding a suitable home.

Fort Wayne (IN) Humane Shelter reports good results from a stricter set of adoption requirements. In the first 15 months of the new program, 92% of adopted animals were confirmed as spayed or neutered. Area veterinarians who examine adopted animals have applauded the new program, their most frequent comment being that “quality is more important than quantity in animal adoptions.”

Fairfax County (VA) Animal Control sends out a follow-up letter whenever an adopted animal is overdue for neutering surgery, pointing out that the county has the right to redeem the animal if the contract is not fulfilled. In its follow-up letter, Animal Welfare League of Arlington, VA, Inc., specifies that failure to have the adopted animal sterilized can result in a $300 fine under county law.

Maryland Federation of Humane Organizations distributes a flier titled “Free Pets Are Not Free!” The flier warns that pets advertised as “free” still require food and shelter, veterinary attention, vaccinations, licenses and boarding.
You can check the effectiveness of your adoption program by setting up a simple typed sheet with these categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal's Date of Ticket</th>
<th>Follow-up</th>
<th>Neutered to Shelter Other Taken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By filling in the sheet for each adoption and checking the totals periodically, you can ensure that the animals you adopt out are being neutered and make any necessary improvements in your adoption follow-up program.

A group of veterinarians in Portland, OR, is making money by running three reduced fee spay/neuter clinics, according to DVM Magazine. Nearly 50 practitioners bought out an existing clinic which had opened in 1979, and each of those shareholders will earn a 10% dividend on an original investment of $500. More veterinarians are buying in, and there is a waiting list of veterinarians who want to perform surgeries at the clinics. The veterinarians say they bought the first clinic not to make a profit but to keep ahead of the reduced fee spay/neuter trend. "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em." They say local humane organizations "think we're great!" DVM says the fees average 30-40% lower than what the practitioners charge privately; cats are spayed for $25, small dogs for $40. During the first year, 4,908 surgeries were performed, 3,702 on cats. A technician checks the incoming pets and notes any medical problems. The pets go to the private offices of the participating veterinarians for suture removal, and the veterinarians can then recommend that those other medical services be performed at regular fees.

One of the participating veterinarians is quoted in DVM as saying that spay/neuter work remains at about 8% of his private practice, as it was before the clinics opened.
How do you say thank you?

How do you thank the mayor for proclaiming "Pet Responsibility Week"? How do you show your appreciation to the local PTA for helping you put on an assembly program to teach the animal laws in your community? How do you show your gratitude to the radio station for airing your announcements about a rabies clinic? How do you say thanks?

Any organization that deals regularly with the public and seeks assistance from persons in positions of power, service organizations, civic clubs, and community groups should have a planned program of awarding certificates of appreciation.

Because you work with animals you know the value of "strokes." When you walk up and down the runs of your shelter, touch a few wet noses and scratch a few ears, you usually get an enthusiastic and friendly response. The same principle applies to people. Everyone needs a stroke now and then.

Certificates of appreciation can do double duty. Not only do they thank the people who have helped you, but when they hang on the wall, they serve as a constant reminder of your organization's presence. Certificates of appreciation are a great public relations device, too.

Any time you give out a certificate of appreciation, you automatically have a newsworthy event. Naturally, the size of your community and the person or group who is to receive the certificate will determine the amount of media attention you attract.

Certificates of appreciation should be professionally printed, professionally lettered, and framed or laminated for the best possible appearance. The more attractive your certificate is, the more the recipients will be appreciative and the better the chance it will be displayed in a prominent place.

Community size is important when considering how often to give certificates. But it's probably safe to suggest that presenting one certificate a week is too often. In other words, you'll probably use fewer than 50 certificates a year. If the certificates cost you $5 each and the mounting or framing costs you another $20 each, your expenses would be $400 per year if you awarded one certificate per month. That $400 could be worth thousands in terms of goodwill and public relations.

You should have at least two different certificates—one for individuals and one for groups. In preparing to word your certificate, you should visit newspaper offices, real estate offices, and other places where people display awards. Check with your printer and examine the wording of other certificates previously printed. Naturally, your group logo or name should be prominently displayed at the top of the certificate, preferably in gold or your organization's colors.

Identify a local calligrapher—possibly an art teacher, a graphic designer, or someone who does calligraphy for a hobby. Strike a deal with this person to do the hand-lettering for you on a regular basis.

Plan to give certificates. Don't leave it to chance. Make it an agenda item for executive sessions. Don't force the issue by using weak excuses to make awards, but don't overlook the obvious, either.
In recent years, the IRS has ruled that Section 501(c)(3) organizations can engage in "certain narrowly defined so-called voter education" activities without endangering their tax-exempt status.

An example of such an approved activity is the preparation and distribution of compilations of voting records of members of Congress on major legislative issues involving a wide range of subjects. The publication, however, can contain no editorial opinion, and its contents and structure cannot imply approval or disapproval of any member. Politically related publications which imply support or opposition, which evidence a bias on certain issues, or which address only a narrow range of issues run a substantial risk of violating the ban on direct or indirect participation in political campaigns.

This is an area of the law which will continue to undergo change. Any humane society which contemplates such voter education activities should first have its attorney carefully research the latest IRS regulations and revenue rulings and design the activities so as not to endanger their tax-exempt status.

Tax-exempt organizations can take the additional precaution of requesting letter rulings from the IRS as to the effect of a proposed voter education activity.

Two six-minute filmstrips on pet owner responsibility, which have been designed specifically for children, are now available from HSUS's National Association for Humane Education. Titled "A Dog's Best Friend" and "Patches Gets Lost, the filmstrips explain the importance of proper pet care and control and the role of the animal control officer.

The set of two filmstrips is $25; NAAHE members get a discount price of $20. For further information on the filmstrips or on NAAHE membership, write NAAHE, Box 98, East Haddam, CT 06432.

HSUS has a limited supply of The Handbook of Animal Welfare available for $16.75, a 25% discount off the regular price. This hardbound book discusses various aspects of pet ownership and the pet overpopulation problem in the US and other countries, with recommendations for citizen action. It was edited by Robert D. Allen and William H. Westbrook, and has articles by animal specialists including Michael W. Fox, Director of HSUS's Institute for the Study of Animal Problems.

HSUS also has the wildlife guide Care of the Wild, Feathered and Furred by Mae Hickman and Maxine Guy for $7.75, another 25% discount. For either or both books, make your check payable to HSUS and address your order to SHELTER SENSE, 2100 L. St., NW, Washington, DC 20037.

Editing Your Newsletter is a handsome guidebook by Mark Beach, available for $7.75 from Coast to Coast Books, 2934 NE 16th Ave., Portland, OR 97212. The book is written specifically for the newsletter editor who may not have much experience and who is just starting the newsletter on a part-time basis. It offers guidelines on writing, artwork, distribution and getting along on a budget.

The Handbook for Club Publicity Chairpersons, Business Reporters, and Volunteer Newspaper Contributors, by newspaper editor Joseph J. Falter, is available for $10.95 from Image Promoters, Inc., Box 191, Lebanon, OH 45036. The handbook gives guidelines on writing news stories and getting them placed in local newspapers, with many good examples. It was recommended by Jan Thomas, program director of Warren County (OH) Animal Control.

National Volunteer Week in 1981 is April 26-May 2. VOLUNTEER, the National Center for Citizen Involvement, offers a Volunteer Recognition Kit with materials and suggestions for this special week. You can get complete information on the kit by writing for the free catalog Volunteer Readership, PO Box 1807, Boulder, CO 80306.

If you're with a municipal government and you think your communications program is a winner, plan to enter the City Hall Digest Public Information Awards competition which is co-sponsored by the American Humane Association. The contest gets underway each fall; for complete information, write City Hall Digest, PO Box 309, Seabrook, MD 20801.

A pamphlet titled "A Wildlife Good Neighbor Policy" is available free from the City of Los Angeles Department of Animal Regulation, Room 410, City Hall South, Los Angeles, CA 90012, for a self-addressed stamped envelope. The pamphlet gives simple tips on how to get along with native wildlife and avoid problems.

Sign up now to receive your free supply of cat adoption materials from 9-Lives' Morris the Cat for "Adopt-A-Cat Month" in June. You will receive a kit of promotional materials plus a supply of kits for cat adopters, including information and coupons. 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 221 N, 3400 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60601. This is the seventh year for the June event; last year, an estimated 80,000 cats were adopted through the program which is co-sponsored by the American Humane Association.

WANTED - Manager for small Central California humane society. Duties involve all aspects of society work including fund raising, public relations, contract negotiation, and administration. Send resume to Thomas A. Tutton, PO Box 2537, Bakersfield, CA 93303.

POSITION WANTED - March 1981 graduate in animal health technology seeks position in animal shelter. Worked one year in a hospital as assistant and co-manager. Experience in sodium pentobarbital euthanasia. Will consider relocating. Contact Lori A. Toivola, 4510-D Appian Way West, Gahanna, OH 43230.

Most people in our field would agree that animal welfare and animal control agencies can use all the help they can get.

Yet, because of the burden of the community's animal problems, these local agencies are frequently unable to take advantage of the help that is available to them—for example, the publications from national humane organizations that might help the agencies develop public interest in animal welfare issues.

Humane and animal control workers also tend to be so preoccupied with their immediate local problems that they often lose sight of the fact that animal welfare advocates can have an active voice in forming public policy with far-reaching and positive results.

An effective state federation of humane societies can solve both problems: It can streamline the flow of information from national to local societies, making the information relevant to local problems, and it can ensure that state legislatures and regulatory bodies recognize animal welfare advocates as a persuasive force.

A major stumbling block in forming an effective state federation is finding well-informed, dedicated leaders whose ties to local agencies do not prevent their participation in the state organization. The North Carolina Humane Federation (NCHF) has been fortunate in attracting several people who, while having no formal ties at all to local humane groups, still understand the problems faced by local agencies.

Where such "unattached" leaders are not available, a federation must work to assure local agencies that its primary commitment is to serve them, to complement rather than duplicate their efforts, and to provide them what they cannot readily provide for themselves. Local groups should be willing to share their leaders with the rest of the state if they are convinced that the federation's motives are sincere.

The state federation's leaders must have the time and money to travel across the state to several meetings a year, although rotation of meeting places will ensure that the burden of travel is shared equally by all members of the board and its committees.

A federation board need not be large—mobility and compatibility are more important than numbers of directors—but it should be large enough to allow a fair delegation of responsibilities and to ensure that the organization will continue to be effective.

The NCHF has worked well for years with no more than fifteen directors and committee leaders.

The federation can strengthen its bond with local agencies by having directors participate in a "speakers bureau." The directors will have a better understanding of local problems and how they can be solved through changes in the state's animal protection laws. And the local groups can become better acquainted with the statewide leaders. This bond, established in individual meetings and workshops, can be encouraged to grow into a strong humanitarian network capable of responding quickly to an appeal for information or action.

North Carolina's animal welfare agencies have come to respond so effectively to the NCHF's "legislative alerts" that an animal welfare bill was recently passed by the NC General Assembly over the vociferous objections of the powerful County Commissioners Association and its paid lobbyist. State representatives and senators now realize that the handful of individuals they know as directors of NCHF actually represent thousands of active, well-informed voters throughout the state, and they no longer scoff at animal welfare bills as they once did.

A federation is in an ideal position to strengthen the humane communications network through its publications. The editors of the NCHF's quarterly News & Views have found that occasional personal calls to humane society presidents to glean information for the newsletter are well worth the cost. These calls prove that the federation's interest in the local societies is sincere and that news of local efforts is important enough to be sought and passed on to others. The "State Roundup" column is the most popular item in the federation newsletter.

On a modest budget (never more than $6,000 per year and usually far less), the NCHF has also managed to publish other important materials:

--The Humane Handbook of North Carolina, now in its second printing, contains a list of the state's humane societies and public and private animal shelters; guidelines for establishing a humane society; a critique of euthanasia methods; commentary on first aid for injured animals, cruelty investigations under North Carolina laws, and humane education programs; and other information. A pocket in the Handbook contains publications lists from national animal welfare organizations and related agencies. The NCHF is pleased that its Handbook has been purchased by animal control officers, health departments and community colleges (including the only one in the state to have a training program for veterinary technicians).

--A new pamphlet entitled "Animal Control in North Carolina" states strongly that animal control workers provide valuable service to the community and that animal control and animal welfare workers must cooperate to achieve their mutual objective of reducing animal suffering and pet owner irresponsibility. Animal control officers and city and county governments have thanked us for this statement of support, and NCHF enjoys an excellent relationship with the NC Animal Control Officers Association.

--When the state passed a law prohibiting abandonment of animals (a law drafted by NCHF), NCHF produced a public information kit with a poster and flier master that can be personalized by the local agency. Bumper stickers with the slogan "Animal Abandonment: A Cruelty -- A Crime" are available in quantity for a nominal sum,
Items...

The National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians has released its 1981 compendium of animal rabies vaccines. The compendium is a listing of USDA-approved vaccines marketed in the US, along with recommendations for immunization procedures and a standard rabies vaccination certificate that is to be used in all states. For a copy, you can write NASPHV, PO Box 13528, Baltimore, MD 21203, or contact your state veterinarian.

DVM Magazine is alerting veterinarians to an increase in rabies cases in the South and Southwest, and the Gaines Dog Research Center says the large number of wild animals carrying the disease make it a continuing threat. Although there are few cases of rabies in humans, the control of the disease depends on pet owners having their pets vaccinated and animal control authorities maintaining a humane program of stray control.

After many months of research and meetings, an animal welfare act for the state of Georgia will be introduced in the state general assembly in 1981. The act allows state inspection of all pet shops, including those in department stores, and requires humane housing and rigid sanitary standards. It includes animal shelters. The act was developed by the Georgia Animal Advisory Committee formed in 1978 by representatives from humane societies, wildlife agencies, the pet industry, USDA, and others. (Reported by Stan Tillman, Hall County Humane Society, 875 Ridge Rd., Gainesville, GA 30510.)

Rusty the cocker spaniel is the 10,000th patient to be neutered at the reduced fee clinic operated by the Dallas SPCA in cooperation with the Dallas County Veterinary Medical Association (Dallas SPCA, 362 S. Industrial Blvd., Dallas, TX 75207). The clinic announced the surgery through press releases, and the event was covered by two local television stations. More than 2,400 dogs and cats are neutered each year by veterinarians who donate their time. The fees are $25 for females, $20 for male dogs and $15 for male cats.

A Wisconsin man was fined $579, sentenced to 20 days in jail, and on probation for two years and ordered to perform 500 hours of community service for dragging a neighbor's dog behind a pickup truck until it was near death and had to be destroyed. According to the area newspaper, the 18-year old was also fined $100 plus costs on a charge of disorderly conduct-attempted theft.

Multnomah County (OR) Animal Control has developed a training session and manual on animal euthanasia. Employees are certified after eight hours of classroom training, a written exam and practical test, and thirty days on the job. The students are given material on sodium pentobarbital injection as the method of choice from HSUS and the County Animal Euthanasia Panel, a group of animal specialists and other interested parties. The course covers procedures for injection and other methods, the effect of anesthesia on the animal, handling of sodium pentobarbital, animal anatomy and restraint, and safety precautions. Students also discuss the emotional impact of the job. Twenty students attended the first training session in December, and more have signed up. (Multnomah County Animal Control, 24450 W. Columbia, Troutdale, OR 97060)

The San Bernardino County (CA) Public Health Department issues licenses free to dogs that are neutered. In 1980, 45% of the dogs licensed were altered, and the department expects this percentage to increase as the program receives more public attention. If the licenses are not renewed when they are due, the fee becomes $25 for all dogs. This program is controversial, since animal control is funded by the license fees. If you have any comments, write SHELTER SENSE, 2100 L St., NW, Washington, DC 20037.

Sonoma County Animal Regulation Department is distributing handouts and bookmarks that explain the county's license and leash laws. The project was funded by the local woolgrowers association because of their loss of livestock to pet dogs. The materials warn rural dog owners that their pets could be killed or injured in the pursuit of livestock and that it is in their pets' best interests to keep them under control. You can get copies of the materials from Information Officer Kathi Prevost at 2555 Mendocino Ave., Santa Rosa, CA 95401.

If you send a donation to the Humane League of Lancaster County (2195 Lincoln Hwy. E., Lancaster, PA 17601), the group will send an attractive card to the party you name telling them that you have made the donation in their name. The group calls it the "Double Gift" project and has found it to be a successful fund-raiser.
He never knew what hit him.

You really loved him. He was a real one-man dog. Sure, he’d wander sometimes, but that was part of his masculine charm. You wouldn’t think of having him altered. You thought it might change his personality.

You were wrong. Dead wrong.

Most of the pets killed on our roads are unaltered males. When you alter your pet you don’t change his masculinity. You allow him to ignore the urge to dash across that busy street. With the urges in control, he’ll be happy to stay home with you. ... Happy to be a real one-man dog.

provided by Humane Media Group-Marin Humane Society.

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Clearinghouse

If you have problems that other readers might be able to solve, send them to Clearinghouse, SHELTER SENSE, 2100 L St., NW, Washington, DC 20037.

Marin Humane Society is looking for slides on the following topics to illustrate a slide program on "Animals and the Law": food animal slaughter, animals in lab research and product testing, zoos, rodeo abuses, livestock transport, factory farming, dogfighting, trapping, denning, animal smuggling, aerial hunting, seal slaughter, animal actors, exotic pets, people wearing wild animal skin coats, horses drawing overcrowded streetcars, buffalo herd slaughter. If you have these slides and are willing to share, contact Marin Humane Society, 171 Bel Marin Keys Blvd., Novato, CA 94947. They will duplicate the slides and return them to you or reimburse you for duplicating at your location, if you provide a receipt.

Just Wright

Good news for the new year

by Phyllis Wright

1840 E. Lancaster
Pt. Worth, TX 76103

F or many years, I've promoted the LES formula for community animal control, legislation, education and pet sterilization. I've stood before statewide animal control officers associations and five-member humane societies alike and said that a LES program would result in less animal suffering, less money spent on housing and destroying homeless animals, and less difficulty for pet owners and non-owners.

Now, I'm pleased to announce to you that the proof of the pudding is in the numbers. We are receiving more and more reports that animal shelters are reducing the numbers of homeless animals in their communities through the LES program.

The Humane Society of Huron Valley handled 11,991 animals in 1979 compared to 18,578 in 1975. The number of animals the shelter had to destroy annually dropped from 12,573 to 6,998 in the same period. The society holds the contract for animal control in the county. A spay/neuter clinic was opened in 1975, and an extensive public education program put into effect. While the numbers of homeless animals in surrounding counties is going up, Huron Valley is enjoying some relief from pet overpopulation thanks to the society's programs.

Tarrant County Humane Society reports that the numbers of puppies and kittens coming into the shelter have been reduced by about half because of a sterilization program. The society sterilizes adopted animals immediately at a clinic on the shelter premises; another clinic is being operated under a contract with a veterinarian in a low-income neighborhood.

The society reports that the low-income pet owners did not patronize the clinic at first, but now the schedule is always full...and the only advertising is word-of-mouth. While humane groups are sometimes accused by veterinarians of trying to undermine their business, the veterinarian running this clinic has a highly successful business from people who would not otherwise have provided the surgery for their pets.

Peninsula Humane Society handled 12,111 dogs in 1979 compared to 21,370 in 1974 because of an extensive program of public information and the operation of a reduced fee clinic.

The Vancouver Regional Branch of the British Columbia SPCA euthanized 21,000 animals in 1979 compared to 80,000 in 1976 because of a combined program of clinic operation, pet tattoo and public education.
The New Hampshire SPCA, which receives animals from a large number of towns in New Hampshire, Maine and Massachusetts, recently reported that animals needing shelter have been reduced by about one-third in the last several years, while the human population in the area has gone up. The group has an aggressive follow-up program on pet adoptions, with a 95% success rate.

The Western Pennsylvania Humane Society reduced its shelter load by 2,288 dogs and 4,234 cats annually between 1970-71 and 1978-79 because of a spay/neuter program with cooperating veterinarians, better education programs, more adoptions and improved shelter facilities.

These communities and others around the country have demonstrated that a responsible program of animal control is an investment in a better future for people and animals. And what may be even more exciting is that more and more individual shelters, cities and counties and even states are beginning to require sterilization of adopted pets and other LES measures.

Clearly, our animal shelters are not yet able to close their doors because there are no more homeless animals in their communities (If an animal shelter is able to do that, I'll bring a case of champagne and help them celebrate!). As we are all too aware, many communities still have the most primitive animal control programs because we have not convinced everyone of the need for greater professionalism in the field. One of the reasons that I've developed and promoted The HSUS Accreditation Program (described elsewhere in this issue) is that it is creating a standard of animal care and control that any community with an ounce of pride is going to want to achieve.

But we do note that the agencies and organizations that started progressive programs years ago are getting the best possible results -- a reduction in the tragic waste of innocent animals' lives, a reduction in the communitywide problems of pet overpopulation.

And these progressive thinkers have done the rest of us in the animal care and control field a great service. They have provided us with another reason to promote more responsible animal control programs. They have given us the best possible reason to fight for the LES formula in our own communities -- it works!