Cats: Do You Handle Them Humanely?
by Lisa J. Morris

Ask almost anyone to describe the sheltering and treatment of animals in a local shelter, and chances are he or she will start telling you about facilities for dogs. Generally, shelter workers feel more assured and comfortable about discussing and handling dogs. Unfortunately, cats remain mysterious creatures to some and often suffer from mishandling by those who should be professional in all domestic animal handling.

Humanely and safely handling all sizes, shapes, and temperaments of domestic animals -- mostly dogs and cats -- poses significant challenges to shelter workers who should be very sensitive to the idea that each animal species has a distinct behavior and needs that require specific and different handling procedures. Therefore, some basic "dos and don'ts" are necessary for those who handle cats on a regular basis.

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Do understand basic cat behavior and body language. Cat body language is very different from dog body language. For example, a cat walking toward you with its tail held straight in the air is greeting you and showing friendliness; a dog with the same behavior is showing aggression. In shelters, many frightened or depressed cats are commonly labeled "wild" and are treated as such. Mishandling a frightened or depressed cat can make it openly defensive and hostile; thus, the label becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. To prevent any unintentional mishandling, familiarize yourself with the basics, which you can do by reading a book such as Understanding Your Cat, by Dr. Michael W. Fox (1974); Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, New York, and Bantam Paperback.

Do understand what stresses cats. Where a dog may enjoy being cuddled, held, or petted, a cat may feel it is being restrained, and restraint often frightens or angers cats. In addition to improper handling, being placed in the same area as dogs can commonly stress cats. Barking, the commotion of dogs, and even the sight of dogs can be very unsettling to cats, which are silent, less active creatures when caged. A cat's instinct when faced with a strange noise or a strange dog is to seek heights or cover, neither of which it can do in a shelter. If, because of space limitations, you must house cats in the same room with dogs, at least position the cages so that the cats are not facing the dogs. The cages then act as a barrier. Also, remember that cats, like dogs, are very sensitive to your stress and reactions. Kind, soothing words and a gentle manner can do much to reassure a frightened cat.

Do learn how to handle intractable (obstinate, hard to manage) and feral (untamed) cats safely and humanely. Investigate the use of netting, such as heavy fish or similar netting, to immobilize or restrain wild or intractable felines. For years, zoo workers have used nets on small mammals, and, therefore, many animal control equipment manufacturers and suppliers carry specialized netting that would be very appropriate for handling domestic cats. A cat in a cage or enclosure is easily restrained with a net and a heavy tool. A shelter worker can either pin the cat to the floor of the cage, grab it by the nape of the neck, or even flip it over in the net, supporting it from beneath, and transport the cat from cage to cage if absolutely necessary. Netting is certainly a humane and safer alternative to handling or over-restraining an intractable feline during cage cleaning or euthanasia. The net, Contained on page 6

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Henry Jackson, of Houston, Texas, is reunited with his dog "Snowflake" at the Bloomington Animal Shelter, one of many stories the group has to tell.

Group Makes Free Videotape

A documentary videotape, part of a new public awareness program by the City of Bloomington Department of Animal Control (3410 South Highway 37, Bloomington, IN 47401), an HSUS accredited organization, has been produced free of charge through a community-access cable television plan.

"The Bloomington Animal Shelter" is a 20-minute videotape regularly made available to all local cable television subscribers (approximately 9,000 homes in Bloomington and 3,000 homes in Monroe County, according to a department spokesperson), on Community Access Channel 3 of the Monroe County Public Library. The program relays human interest stories surrounding the animal control department of the type that are, reportedly, seldom publicized. Various interested local groups have also viewed the videotape.

"A year ago, when I spoke to people about my efforts on behalf of the shelter, their responses would often be negative...across all segments of the community," said Donna S. Robinson, information officer. (Bloomington, seat of Monroe County, has a population of approximately 52,000, according to Robinson, while Monroe County has approximately 46,000 residents.) "As always, we are dealing with community apathy and misunderstanding about animal control," she said. "Although there hasn't been an avalanche of new shelter volunteers or a windfall of donations, I believe the positive responses we hear are an indication of the program's effort."

Since 1974, Channel 3 has allowed individuals or groups to make videotapes for and about the community without charge, according to Dave Cole, Channel 3 director. The plan includes three steps: A program proposal is submitted to the channel by interested parties, and if approved, the individuals or group representatives attend a mandatory two-hour hands-on training session to learn to run the videotape equipment, which is then loaned out to them for the first filmmaking on a first-come, first-served basis.

Channel 3 sponsors an average 385-400 new programs each year, said Cole. The number of times a particular program is aired is determined by the number of public requests. During library hours, programs are scheduled by request, while during the evening, the channel generally sets its own program schedule. Channel 3's plan receives 20-percent funding from the Monroe County Public Library and 30 percent from a franchise fee paid by the cable company, while the remaining 50 percent is expected to come from the cable company itself.

"Humane societies and other interested groups should find out whether they have a local community-access center by contacting their local cable television company or their city government," said Cole.

Last spring, Robinson showed the department's videotape to approximately ten journalists, including one woman who had, reportedly, written an emotional newspaper article about her own efforts to breed her cat because she thought kittens were cute. The group responded favorably to the program. The Kennel Club donated $750 to the shelter after viewing the film. Another viewer immediately offered to do volunteer work for the shelter, said Robinson.

In the future, the department plans to produce a second videotape, more educational in tone, that describes specific animal-control activities and emphasizes responsible pet ownership.
Send your holiday greetings on an HSUS Christmas card. This year's design by wildlife artist, Joy Swan, depicts a colorful collection of creatures in a peaceful, snowy setting. Inside, the greeting, "May you and all creatures be blessed with peace at this beautiful season...and always," will please friends and loved ones who value wildlife.

There are 25 cards and envelopes to a box. Order one box for $7 or four or more boxes for $6 each. Send check or money order to The HSUS, Christmas Cards, 2100 L St. N.W., Washington, DC 20037. Orders will be sent by UPS and must be delivered to a street address. (Please do not use a P.O. box number.)

In an effort to inform more children about animals and humane issues, The Humane Society of the United States is introducing a new publication for young people.

**Kind News** is a four-page tabloid newspaper published in two editions: Level I for grades 1-3 and Level II for grades 4-6. Each issue contains stories about animals and animal issues and reports about children who are working to help animals. In addition, the new newspaper features games, puzzles, book and movie reviews, things to write for, project ideas, and much more. Every section is designed to help young readers learn more about animals, and most importantly, learn to care.

**Kind News** also provides an affordable humane education tool for adults. There are no single-copy subscriptions to the new newspaper. Instead, each one-year subscription entitles a subscriber to receive quarterly packets of 35 copies of the publication. For the cost of just one subscription, an adult can provide **Kind News** to 35 children for an entire year.

Humane societies and animal shelters can use the new newspaper in many ways. It can serve as a handout for schoolchildren during tours or classroom presentations. Copies can be re-sold over the counter in the reception area of a shelter or can be included with a teacher's newsletter. **Kind News** would also be a perfect publication for junior group members. (There's even a place to stamp an organization's name and affix a mailing label.)

A one-year subscription to **Kind News**, which includes quarterly packets of 35 copies of one level, costs $10; $5 if you're a member of The National Association for the Advancement of Humane Education (NAHAE). If you'd like more than 35 copies of the newspaper each quarter, or if you'd like to subscribe to both levels of the newspaper, additional subscriptions cost $5 each.

For more information and a sample copy of **Kind News**, contact NAHAE, Box 362, East Haddam, CT 06423.

Free sealable, disposable pooper scoopers are offered to the public, as long as supplies last, by the San Francisco SPCA (2500 16th St., San Francisco, CA 94103).

The 1 1/2 million "Poochee Bags" are waterproof, biodegradable, and feature a scoop/lock lid that closes securely. Small enough to fold compactly in pocket or purse, the bags are large enough to gather the waste of any size dog. Each bag is printed with instructions and a cautionary note on the front that says "CONTAINS ANIMAL WASTE. DO NOT OPEN."

"So far, the response has been fantastic," said Lynn Spivak, SPCA director of public information. The pooper scooper campaign has been reported by two TV stations and five to six radio stations in the San Francisco area.

Spivak said the SPCA bags were designed by a local contributor, who had them manufactured overseas; however, she will send a sample Poochee Bag to other groups that are interested in developing their own pooper scooper ideas.

Milk cartons provided widespread advertising, with minimal expense, for the Nevada Humane Society (P.O. Box Kind, 200 Kresge Lane, Sparks, NV 89431).

In cooperation with the Model Dairy (P.O. Box 3017, Reno, NV 89505), the humane society had milk cartons printed on one side with its name, address, telephone number, and a brief description of its animal services, as part of a 30-day promotional effort. Several thousand cartons were distributed to area consumers. (Model Dairy cooperates with many organizations to produce similar advertisements, said Leon Webster, Model Dairy sales and production representative.)

The promotion required little effort by the humane society, according to Dr. James E. Dale, its executive director, who was merely to set up the copy to be printed, for which the group spent no more than $100.

Dale said Model Dairy policy did not allow the society to have forms printed on the cartons to specifically request donations. However, he said, "Virtually any time the organization receives press or media coverage of any type, our 'in the mail' contributions increase."

According to Dale, many people confuse the Nevada Humane Society with the animal-control agency in Reno. "We take every opportunity available...to explain the services of the Nevada Humane Society and our programs...This promotion was very valuable."
A new booklet, originally designed to aid legislative efforts to ban the metal-jaw leghold trap in Connecticut, could be a helpful resource for all area legislators concerned with the issue.

Leghold Trap: Expert Opinions was prepared by George D. Whitney, D.V.M., after over 100 Connecticut veterinarians passed a resolution in May 1981, opposing the use of the leghold trap on humane grounds, without one negative vote.

Whitney's collection of anti-leghold-trap opinions includes those of professors, deans, laboratory directors, department heads, and veterinarians from veterinary schools across the nation, as well as those of sportsmen, naturalists, and other miscellaneous authorities.

Single copies cost $3, including postage, and are available from George D. Whitney, D.V.M., Oakwood Rd., Orange, CT 06477.

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which protects the worker, and the heavy towel, which calms the animal and protects the worker, are far more humane than leather gloves and a control stick.

* Do observe and evaluate each individual cat prior to handling and adoption to determine how the cat reacts or responds to its environment and to you. This evaluation of temperament is important not only for your safety but also for the well-being of the feline. You, your public, and the animals you are charged to protect are well served by a careful evaluation. For instance, some cats respond well to handling, are the typical "lap cat," and are not afraid of children, while other cats are aloof and reluctant to be approached. Respect these differences and educate your supporters to respect them also. The beautiful feline with the "look but don't touch" attitude is not a good adoption choice for a family with three children who want a lap cat; this feline may be stressed by persistent attention and handling and may even react aggressively.

* Do take the time and make the effort to evaluate each cat as an individual in the euthanasia process just as you would in the adoption process. Again, the concern is for your safety and the cat's well-being. For those cats that do not like to be handled or are frightened or excitable, the euthanasia process is particularly stressful psychologically. Do not hesitate to use an appropriate tranquilizer, since minimizing psychological stress, as well as physical stress or pain, is important during euthanasia. If you use sodium pentobarbital, many cats will, with proper handling, tolerate intravenous injections, and on others it may be preferable to use intraperitoneal injections. An intraperitoneal injection is particularly suited to feral or intractable cats that have been netted and held to the floor or on the bottom of a cage. Intracardiac injections should be reserved for the tranquilized or extremely docile cat and for the very skillful technician who can inject into the heart on the first attempt.

DON'Ts:

* Don't rely on the use of a control stick for restraining a cat. A frightened cat could be enraged by a control stick and react with such defensive hostility that the amount of restraint you may have to use will produce severe stress and injury. If anything you do as a handler enrages a cat, back off and let it quiet down or you both risk injury.

* Don't transport a cat on the end of a control stick. It should not surprise anyone that the use of a control stick can bruise or crush a cat's windpipe, damage its vertebrae or even break its neck.

* Don't depend on wearing leather gloves while handling intractable cats. Gloves can produce a false sense of security. Even a small cat can bite through leather gloves, and a cat bite can be a serious injury to you. These bites are puncture wounds, which often become seriously infected. Additionally, when you wear leather gloves, you lessen your ability to monitor the amount of force you are using and inadvertently, you could injure a cat.

* Don't insist upon handling the truly wild or feral cat you are going to euthanize. Even though a feral cat may look like the domestic cats you are used to handling, it is distinctly wild. Handling such an animal is not only dangerous to you but extremely stressful for the animal. If you feel you should hold such a cat in your shelter, or if your law requires you to hold it for a certain number of days, you should do so but attend only to its basic needs. Do not stress it any more than you must. The skillful use of a net and towel, as described above, will be very important when it is time to euthanize the feral cat that has been held in your facility. If you elect not to hold the cat, and it is in a humane trap, leave it in the trap to euthanize it. Neither an intramuscular injection of an appropriate tranquilizer prior to euthanasia nor an intraperitoneal injection of sodium pentobarbital requires the removal of the cat from the cage. One of the most dangerous and inhumane things you can do is remove the feral cat from its cage, chase it around the room, restrain it with excessive use of force, and then euthanize it.

More and more shelter workers are becoming aware of the specifics of cat behavior and are recognizing some of the problems inherent in the sheltering and handling of cats. These "dos and don'ts" can serve as a useful tool for evaluating the way you treat cats. They are only a starting point, however. The challenge to all animal workers is to be as humane and skillful as possible regarding the institutional treatment of cats. It is imperative, for safety and humaneness, that shelter workers know and understand cat behavior and body language and learn good, humane restraint.

Lisa J. Morris is director of Accreditation for The Humane Society of the United States.

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A new program that gives eligible employees up to one week of paid sabbatical leave in order to learn more about animals and animal-welfare issues may infuse new enthusiasm, expertise, and a fresh perspective on everyday problems into the Marin Humane Society (171 Bel Marin Keys Blvd., Novato, CA 94947).

According to Executive Director Diane Allevato, the new program, effective last July 1, is available every other year to those who have completed three continuous years of employment with the society. While the personal decisions of whether or not to take the leave rests with each employee, the leave is not cumulative and can only be used during its designated years. Leave has no cash value and will be prorated for permanent part-time employees.

Participants must use the sabbatical for a volunteer, unpaid, animal-welfare-related project of their choice. For example, they can work at another shelter, attend a dog-training seminar, research and write a report on an animal disease or-handling problems while working on a farm, accompany a veterinarian on his or her rounds, or volunteer at a wildlife or marine life center. The society pays class or tuition fees of up to $100. Leave time must accommodate work and scheduled vacations, with a supervisor's approval. The slow winter months, January to April, are considered priority months for the sabbatical leave, said Allevato.

Each returning staff member must write a two-to-three page report about his or her leave experience, which will be shared with other staff members and become a part of the employee's personnel record. 

The Walworth County Humane Society Inc. (WCHS) (Route 3, Box 522-C, Delavan, WI 53115) is using its public requests for animal assistance as a public information tool.

A "Special Request Journal" is published in the group's quarterly newsletter, Humanely Speaking, to show members and other supporters unique or exceptional work on behalf of animals that is not normally observed by them during the course of routine shelter and animal-control activities. Requests are logged by date, with resulting investigations, rescues, and their outcomes described.

The journal was developed by the humane society's board of directors after it became clear that the public seemed unaware of the many types of calls for assistance received by the organization, according to Marilyn Roznak, vice president, board member, and newsletter editor for the society. "I think I can speak for all the WCHS directors in stating that the journal has contributed a great deal to public awareness of what our shelter is doing," she said. The newsletter is sent to over 300 members and supporters in Wisconsin as well as some in Illinois who maintain summer homes in Wisconsin.

The humane society has received approximately 60 special request calls since last January, according to Steve McCarragher, shelter manager and county humane officer. In a typical case, a dog had two surgeries to amputate its leg, crushed when it was caught in a steel-jawed leghold trap. After the journal reported the dog's rescue and surgeries, the humane society received many calls from interested people, and the dog was eventually adopted out.

"The journal has told our readers what we are doing, and they, in turn, support us at hearings and meetings," said Roznak. "It is a great feeling."

In the first promotion of its size by the Sacramento Division of Safeway Stores Inc. (P.O. Box 20214, Sacramento, CA 95820) an "adopt-a-pet" campaign, including free pet food, was recently co-sponsored with Carnation Pet Food and humane organizations to draw attention to the pet-overpopulation problem.

Eighty-five Safeway stores in the California Valley, from the Oregon border to below Fresno, and in Western Nevada, offered free pet food to people who adopted an animal from any participating humane organization. The organizations gave adopters pet-food coupons, redeemable at the Safeway stores, according to Betty J. Lewis, Safeway advertising manager.

A full-page advertisement of the campaign ran in 51 newspapers with a combined circulation of 1,500,000, reported Lewis. She said the campaign idea was originated by another Safeway advertising manager, Larry Bohnsack.

According to Phyllis Wright, HSUS vice president of Companion Animals, "Free pet food should be a reward to caring people who adopt animals because they really want them -- not a promotion for animal adoptions by just anybody."

Lewis was mindful of discouraging animal adoptions by people only interested in pet food and said Carnation was very concerned about possible exaggerated adoption figures and coupon fraud, even providing humane organizations with a return envelope for unused coupons.

At last report, the total number of adoptions had not yet been determined, according to Lewis, who indicated the promotion was hurt by a major storm and floods that hit California at approximately the same time. She said four city and county animal agencies refused to participate in the promotion, and their names appeared in the ad in a disclaimer according to advertising compliance regulations.

Lewis said she would like to repeat and improve this promotion. "I would like more manufacturers to contribute food coupons," she said.

Seriously sick or starving cats and dogs may be rehabilitated by feeding them raw or cooked liver blood through a tube or syringe, according to Phyllis Cook, president of the Washington County Humane Society (3650 Highway 60, Slinger, WI 53086).

"Often these animals are so weak, they cannot lift their heads and simply go to sleep without trying to eat," she said. "Some must be euthanized; others can possibly be saved, she said.

A local butcher drains the blood from fresh liver, which Cook uses to nourish the animals by gently inserting a turkey baster or 3-cc syringe into their mouths. Liver is high in iron and vitamin B.

Cook suggests that such animals be fed in small amounts, frequently, even during the night. Kittens may receive 3ccs of the juices every one to one-half hour; puppies receive 6ccs over the same time span (5ccs equal approximately one teaspoon). Cook also feeds them Gatorade, an energizing drink, and as they grow stronger, she adds one soft scrambled egg a day, goat's milk and, eventually, high-protein pet food.

"When the animals start to look for food, I increase the amounts but cut down on the number of meals," she said.
"All One Family" Conference Theme

"All One Family," The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is hosting its annual conference this fall in historic Ft. Worth, Texas. The two- and one-half-day conference will take place Thursday, Oct. 13 through Saturday, Oct. 15, 1983, at the Americas Hotel in Ft. Worth. A pre-conference symposium on Wednesday, Oct. 12, will be sponsored jointly by The Institute for the Study of Animal Problems (ISAP) and the National Association for the Advancement of Humane Education (NAANE) to explore the interrelationships between animals, education, and the development of empathy.

Join conference program moderator Dr. Amy Freeman Lee and keynote speaker John Hoyt, HSUS president, to welcome Richard Morgan, national coordinator of the Mobilization for Animals, Marilyn E. Wilhelm, director of The Wilhelm Schole in Houston, as well as Dr. Michael W. Fox, director of ISAP. Take part in our informative workshop series, to learn more about your role in caring for animal species.

Banquet festivities on Friday evening will be highlighted by presentation of the Joseph Wood Krutch Award to an outstanding humanitarian. A special post-conference tour of the 1,500-acre Waterfall Ranch will reveal various African wildlife species living there. Come join HSUS for fun, friendship, and new knowledge about our fellow creatures. Further conference and registration information can be obtained by writing HSUS Conference, 2100 L St. N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

An American Kennel Club (AKC) legal "supersfund" could help test the legality of laws that arbitrarily limit the number of dogs a person owns, said Jim Danhauer in the July 1983 issue of Dog World. Revised laws could then encourage penalties for irresponsible dog owners, minimum care standards for all owners -- thereby assisting humane-society efforts -- and tightened control over unscrupulous dog breeders or retailers, he said.

Danhauer suggested AKC increase its entry fees for one year to create the fund, which would be matched by funds from dog food manufacturers, magazines, supply manufacturers, and others.

"There exists a standard set of published ordinances for a city to adopt when it decides to incorporate," said Danhauer. "Adopting the standard...laws simply saves time...All in the fancy are encouraged to obtain a complete copy of the local laws on animal control...because ignorance is not bliss."

Danhauer blamed the casual pet owner for allowing his or her dog to run loose, soil neighborhood yards, and get into people's trash. "Our sport, our hobby, and our avocation is directly threatened," he said in the article. "We can approach our elected officials together and effect change -- change directed toward responsible dog ownership."

A November rabies symposium, sponsored by the Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control, will analyze the current status of wildlife rabies throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico; evaluate control programs; and explore methods to attain a higher degree of control.

"North American Symposium on Rabies in Wildlife" will be held Nov. 7-8, 1983, in the university's East Wing Auditorium. The two-day registration fee is $100. For additional details, contact Dr. Harvey R. Fischman, Department of Epidemiology, Johns Hopkins University, School of Hygiene and Public Health, 615 N. Wolfe St., Baltimore, MD 21205; telephone, (301) 355-3579.
Recently, I've heard of several cases where a distraught pet owner reportedly threatened to sue a local humane society or animal shelter after it adopted out his or her cat or dog to a new owner. When learning about this, some new owners sympathetically returned the pets to their original owners and chose other animals to adopt. Others refused to give them up.

At all times, you must maintain complete, accurate animal records, and hold animals for the legally required number of days before they are euthanized or adopted out, to avoid liability for the loss of someone's pet. On the other hand, the whole point of adopting out animals from your shelter is to give them a new start in a good home. If you reveal the names of new pet owners to the old owners, you may run into contractual problems with those new owners and be sued.

In some cases, innocent pet owners who were vacationing, while entrusting their pets at home to housesitters, returned too late to retrieve their animals from the shelter. Helping such owners get back their pets, in extreme cases, is a considerate thing to do; but, if you fail, you may be glad you protected yourself by following the law and running a professional office. If your organization does receive a letter from a pet owner's attorney, it should consult with its own attorney immediately.