Pet Registries:  
Well-Meaning, But Problematic  
by Guy Hodge

A system of registering pets using tattooed identification marks would be ideal if it could be nationally established and made uniform. So far, pet registration has not realized its promise in the United States, where the first national dog registry was founded in 1966. Since that time, more than 75 other national and regional registries have been formed; however, a majority of these companies are no longer operational. In many cases, tattooed dogs and cats outlasted their registries.

Although run by well-intentioned people, pet registries have been plagued by several problems. Growth in the number of registries has impeded tracing the owners of stray pets. With more than 20 registries presently operating, it is costly, time-consuming, and complicated to trace an animal through the maze of companies and codes.

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Registries have failed to devise distinctive or recognizable codes. The most popular tattoo marking is an owner's Social Security number. The federal government assigns an individual Social Security number to every resident of the United States, and a Social Security number can be easily recognized. However, laws intended to protect citizens' privacy prevent the federal Social Security Administration from revealing the identity of the person to whom a particular number is assigned. Thus, such tattoos are not traceable through government channels.

Nonetheless, Social Security numbers are used by several national and regional registries as well as by veterinary hospitals, shelters, and breed clubs. Typically, the only method a rescuer of a stray pet has for tracing the owner is by telephoning each registry until he or she finally locates the correct one. This process can involve a large number of long-distance telephone calls.

But rescuers may have difficulty contacting registries. The HSUS has surveyed numerous shelters and discovered that many are not acquainted with the registries currently in existence. Only one facility could name as many as three registries. The remaining facilities each knew of only one registry, and if a telephone call to that registry failed to locate a pet's owner, the shelter could do no more.

This predicament generally is the fault of registry officials. Most agencies are undercapitalized. Some are the inventions of individuals with little experience or knowledge of pet identification systems. Some officials have failed to realize the need for establishing communication channels with veterinary hospitals, shelters, and breed clubs within the regions they serve. Many officials have been interested in mailing announcements to such institutions but have not known where to acquire mailing lists or have not had the funds to pay for printing and postage.

There are other problems with tattooing. Few people who rescue stray pets, and few animal shelter employees, examine stray pets for tattoos. Therefore, it is not only unlikely that a tattoo can be traced, but it is improbable that the tattoo will even be found. Some pet owners refuse to tattoo their animals because of concern that the tattooing procedure may cause pain to animals. There are two common methods for tattooing animals: through use of a stylus, similar to a writing pen, and of a clamp system.

Question: How does a computer store all the letters of the alphabet, the numbers, and special characters like "?" with only two codes (zero or one)?
Answer: It doesn't. Bits are combined into a unit of seven or eight bits, depending on the manufacturer, called a byte. For example, a byte that represents the character "A" in an IBM computer is represented by byte "1100001." The number "1" is "1110001." Remember, each one or zero is a bit. The computer reads each bit as either "on" or "off," and that's how it recognizes characters. The term byte, therefore, is synonymous with character (meaning a single character of data).

Main computer storage consists of numerous bytes or characters. The storage is measured in X number of K (thousand) bytes or in megabytes (mega means million). Once data is stored on the computer, a computer program can direct the electronic circuitry to the place where the data is located. It can then process the data.

There are different types of computer storage, although all computer systems store data in the form of bits. RAM, which stands for "random access memory," is one commonly used for storing data. RAM means that data can be written into and read from storage and it can be altered.

Another type of memory, called ROM (read only memory), is data stored when the equipment is manufactured. It cannot be altered and is used to store programs that will always be the same. An example of a program that might be part of ROM is one that runs the BASIC programming language on many microprocessors (PCs). This type of stored data is instantly available when the computer is turned on.

Operations done by the computer are controlled by computer programs, called software. Programs are sets of instructions that tell the computer what to do. They are created through the use of

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A California organization is working to solve the "no pets" policy in privately owned rental housing and condominiums. Citizens Against Housing Discrimination for Pet Owners Inc. (CADPO), also known as Concerned and Dedicated Pet Owner Education (CADPOE), wants to improve the relationship between owners or managers of rental housing and condominiums and pet owners in order to change the "no pets" policy to one of "responsible pet owners welcome." The group has helped some to do this within California and 20 other states.

CADPO/CADPOE members receive an educational package which informs owners and managers why responsible pet owners are good tenants or residents and which includes a checklist to help them screen pet owners. The package also contains tips that tell pet owners how to qualify as responsible pet owners and acceptable tenants or residents. A one-year membership to this organization costs $5; donations are also welcome. To join, send a check or money order to CADPO/CADPOE, 5053 Cartwright Ave., #204, North Hollywood, CA 91601.

Recent efforts to transport an aged dog across five states to its waiting family highlight the importance of cooperation between humane- and animal-control workers nationwide.

The "puppy express" brought home Snoopy, a 17-year-old beagle/dachshund mix with various age-related health problems, and was made possible by Wyoming-, Nebraska-, Iowa-, Illinois-, and Indiana animal workers, who volunteered for the project, and by a Wyoming boarding kennel and a veterinary clinic.

Snoopy belongs to Joe and Nancy Topp, who, when recently moving from California to Indiana, experienced car problems in Wyoming, forcing them to continue their travel by bus and to leave Snoopy behind in a local boarding kennel. Due to reported maintenance problems, Snoopy was transferred to a local veterinary clinic, where she remained until she began her approximately 1500-mile trip home. The saga began when the Toppes asked Rod Hale, director of the Fort Wayne Department of Animal Control in Indiana, for advice about ways to safely and inexpensively transport their pet to their new home.

According to Cathi English, former Wyoming animal-control officer, former president of the Wyoming SPCA in Casper, and one of the puppy express coordinators, the project bonded animal-control officers and humane workers into a cohesive network dedicated to a common goal. "This project is what I call a 'saver,' which keeps a person in this business after job stresses create 'burnout'!" she said. English is now an animal-control officer for the Sacramento County Department of Animal Control in California.

By carefully arranging meeting times and places and transportation routes, express workers brought Snoopy home to the Toppes, who were further surprised to learn that an anonymous Wyoming SPCA member had donated money to fully pay the Wyoming boarding-kennel and veterinary bills for the family.

"Snoopy reminded us of how much we need one another's support and how much good we, together, can do for animals," said English.

Some New Jersey veterinarians and animal organizations are working together in a landmark state program to provide low-cost spay/neuter surgeries for cats and dogs belonging to qualified state residents.

The new program was established by state law in 1983, allowing some area veterinarians to perform the operations for $10 per animal, funded by an additional $3 license fee for unspayed or unneutered dogs. The cost of each operation also includes necessary vaccinations.

According to HSUS Mid-Atlantic Regional Director Nina Austenberg, whose region includes New Jersey, pet owners must be participating in one of the following assistance programs to qualify for the low-cost arrangement: food stamps, Supplemental Security Income, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, general public assistance, pharmaceutical assistance to the aged and disabled, rental assistance under the Housing and Community Development Act, or the Lifeline credit program and the tenant's Lifeline assistance program.

Veterinarians have been instructed to limit the number of low-cost surgeries to 10 per month. Surgeries will be performed on a first-come, first-served basis until officials determine how long available funds will last.

For a list of participating veterinarians and for other information, contact Nina Austenberg, director, HSUS Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, 3700 Olds Rd., Bedminster, NJ 07921; telephone, (201) 234-2260.
Leading veterinary authorities agree that the number-one killer of household cats is feline leukemia, a highly contagious AIDS-like disease that has infected over 10 percent of the 52 million cats in this country.

"Most pet owners find it almost impossible to discern feline leukemia in their cats during the early or "carrier" stage," said Dr. Robert Wilkins, staff clinical pathologist at the Animal Medical Center in New York. "Early on, a cat can show no signs of the disease. Much later, symptoms such as severe weight loss or anemia can become apparent. If there are other cats in the household, you can bet they've already been infected. The only way the pet owner can be certain is to have the cat tested regularly, preferably by what's called the ELISA method, a highly sensitive test that's capable of picking up the virus in its earliest stages."

TECHAMERICA, the same Kansas-based company that developed and licensed the first highly successful canine Parvo vaccine, used to protect dogs against the 1979-80 parvo virus outbreak, has perfected a new ELISA-type diagnostic test kit for feline leukemia. It is the fastest accurate test on the market today.

TECHAMERICA's DIAVISYSTEM™ FeLV, now being distributed to veterinarians across the country, is quick, simple to use, and economical, yet sensitive enough to detect the virus in its first (carrier) stage. Using the kit, veterinarians can easily perform the tests in their offices, reducing outside laboratory time.

At this moment, feline leukemia testing is the only weapon veterinarians have to fight the disease. Dr. Audrey Hayes, chief of FeLV, at the Animal Medical Center in New York, feels with certainty that until a vaccine is available for cats, testing is not always in order after the first positive diagnosis. "If a cat tests positive, the owner shouldn't rush to put it to sleep," explained Dr. Wilkins. "Many cats can throw off the virus."

TECHAMERICA's Scott Winston, Ph.D., head of Syngene, the company's biological research and development division, feels the question of euthanasia should be left to veterinarians since they would have the clinical history of particular animals. If an otherwise healthy cat tests FeLV-positive, that cat should be retested and carefully watched. Possibly, it can recover. "TECHAMERICA is now working to perfect a feline leukemia vaccine," said Winston. "We hope to market the vaccine in tandem with our diagnostic kit."

Feline leukemia virus is often referred to as "Feline-AIDS" because it's a "retro virus," the same type found in HIV, AIDS victims. There is no evidence of any crossover to humans. It does infect other cats, but it does not jump from one species to another.

Winston feels that cats which test FeLV-positive, throw off the virus, and test FeLV-negative should be retested at frequent, regular intervals to keep track of the virus and any possible change back to positive. With the ease and economy of TECHAMERICA's new DIAVISYSTEM™ ELISA test, pet owners can protect their pets against the disease with a minimum of difficulty. "There's no reason why the feline leukemia test shouldn't be a part of every cat's regular check-up," he said.

For further information, contact TechAmerica Group Inc., Animal Health Division, P.O. Box 338, Elwood, KS 66024; telephone, (913) 365-9076.

Carole Conover is an account executive for Sandra Powers Public Relations (440 N. 28th St., New York, NY 10016), and she is conducting a feline leukemia awareness campaign for TechAmerica Group Inc., and she is active in the humane field.

Animal-control office supervisor. Responsible for pet licensing, canvassing program, pet adoption, spay/neuter project, and liaison with agencies and veterinarians. Must participate in annual budget development and monitor expenditures. Salary, $2,094 to $2,723 per month depending on experience. Apply by November 23 to Multnomah County, Employee Relations Division, 1120 S.W. 5th, Room 1430, Portland, OR 97204.

Assistant director, animal-control division. Responsible for general operation, including field, office, and kennel services as well as fee collection, licensing, disease control, and enforcement of all animal-control ordinances. Must adhere to contractual obligations. Ideal candidate should have a bachelor's degree with courses in business or public administration and two years of animal-control experience, preferably at the administrative level. High school graduation required. Experience will be considered in place of college education. Salary $18,000 to $20,000 annually. Send resume to Atlanta Humane Society, 981 Howell Mill Road N.W., Atlanta, GA 30318.

Executive director for progressive humane society. Responsible for shelter operation, personnel supervision, euthanasia, investigations, public relations, education, and official liaison. Need strong administrative and public-relations skills. Submit resume, salary history, references to Houston Humane Society, P.O. Box 45528, Houston, TX 77245. Mark "confidential" and to the attention of the president, board of directors.

Shelter manager for organization with aggressive adoption program and aggressive volunteer involvement. Performs animal first aid, and order supplies. Requires humane attitude and ability to deal with the public. Salary, benefits, house, and yard. Send resume, salary requirements, and references to Decisions, Suite 530, 401 N. Wabash, Chicago, IL 60611; attn: Elaine.

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that creates tiny puncture wounds in an animal’s ear. According to Phyllis Wright, vice president of Companion Animals for The Humane Society of the United States, it appears that neither the stylus nor the clamp causes an animal discomfort as long as the animal is properly restrained and the tattooing procedure is properly performed. Of the two methods, however, Wright prefers the use of a stylus.

Finally, there is the issue of the marketability of a registry program. Few stray dogs rescued by wardens or by good samaritans are wearing collars and identification tags. If a pet owner is unwilling to invest a few dollars in this inexpensive, dependable form of identification, then he or she is unlikely to spend $35 to $50 on tattooing and registering a pet.

In 1977, Ralston Purina, the largest manufacturer of pet foods in the United States, test-marketed a national pet registry intended to be a low-priced promotional service to pet owners. Ralston Purina executives spent several years researching and designing their program, and they committed five million dollars to the project. Test marketing was conducted in Austin, Texas, and in Knoxville, Tenn. Based on results of the tests in those two cities, Ralston Purina executives concluded that there was not a sufficient number of interested pet owners to warrant continuing the program. Although the Ralston Purina Dog I.D. Program was as carefully planned and well financed as possible, its failure suggests that tattooing is unlikely to assume a significant role within the United States in reuniting stray pets with their owners.

Regarding the benefits of tattooing, registries claim that tattooing discourages pet theft. But a thief will not stop to examine a dog or cat for a tattoo before abducting the animal. If the thief is experienced, he or she probably would realize that it is unlikely anyone will discover the animal is tattooed and would know of the difficulty in locating the animal’s rightful owner. Moreover, the professional thief may be equipped with a stylus, which would enable him or her to alter or obliterate a tattoo.

Registries also claim that tattoos, which are supposed to be permanent, assure that missing dogs or cats will be reunited with their owners. As I previously noted, it is unlikely tattoos would be noticed or would prove traceable. A personalized identification tag affixed to a pet’s collar is more useful and substantially less costly as a form of pet identification.

A tattoo does serve as one proof of ownership. There is a chronic problem with people who assume ownership of stray dogs and cats. Many people seem to think that unattended animals are theirs for the taking. When a dispute arises as to the rightful owner of an animal, a tattoo could be useful in establishing true ownership. When an animal worker or someone else finds a tattooed stray pet, there are several ways he or she may find the proper registry: The National Dog Registry (227 Stebbins Road, Carmel, NY 1052) uses individual nine-digit Social Security numbers for identification. However, most pet registries will enroll animals that are tattooed with Social Security numbers. Several states now use Social Security numbers as motor-vehicle-operator license numbers, making it possible to trace pet owners through local police departments and departments of transportation.

I.D. Pet (telephone, (800) 243-9147), another major pet registry, uses a code that is always preceded by an "X" (their registered trademark). No one should tattoo an animal with the "X" unless it is then registered with I.D. Pet. I.D. Pet will, however, register animals (including birds, horses, and other species) that bear any type of tattoo. Dog breed clubs commonly use American Kennel Club (AKC) registration numbers, which contain two letters followed by six digits. (The AKC is located at 51 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10010; telephone (212) 481-9292.)

Pet owners occasionally invent their own tattoo markings using such codes as telephone numbers, automobile license numbers, street numbers, street addresses, or personal initials. In many cases, such tattoo I.D.s are useless, meaning nothing to anyone other than the individual pet owners who invented them, particularly if they haven't been registered with a pet registry.

Guy Hodge is director of Data and Information Services for The Humane Society of the United States.

An updated list of U.S. pet registries will be available in December to those who request it. Address your request to Shelter Sense, The HSUS, 2100 L St. N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

A new slide/sound program reveals the experiences and feelings of a local humane officer while encouraging greater public support for local humane societies and SPCAs. The program would be useful for community meetings, humane education classes, and at other times.

Just Ask the Animals contains 50 slides that depict the experiences of former Virginia Humane Officer Al Bristor, using actual case photography. The five-minute, 45-second program discusses animal injuries, -cruelty, -neglect, and -abandonment, and it calls for increased public concern for animals. Bristor recommends the program for those in grade three and above. Single copies of the program cost $29.50 (Virginia residents must and a four-percent sales tax or indicate their tax-exempt number on the order). This price includes 50 slides in durable plastic mounts within protective easy-view slide pages, a TDK cassette tape recorded in Dolby noise reduction, a program script with indicated slide changes, and shipping and handling. Orders of 10 or more programs cost only $27 each. Send a check or money order to Interpretations Unlimited, 201 Progress St., Blacksburg, VA 24060.

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**First Aid for Pets**

A sturdy, readable book on pet first aid makes a perfect Christmas stocking stuffer for any potential pet owner, and animal organizations should encourage this type of gift, postponing pet adoptions until after the holiday rush is over.

*First Aid for Pets,* by Craig L. Dixon, D. V. M., is printed on sturdy cardboard and is spiral bound at the top for easy stand-up reading. Each page is color-coded for easy reference and lists a pet health problem, with simple, numbered instructions about how to care for the problem while waiting to consult a veterinarian. Cartoon illustrations of a cat, a dog, and a bird highlight such topics as bird illness, bee or wasp stings, broken bones, burns, heat stroke, poisoning, urinary problems, vomiting, and much more.

Animal organizations can order bulk copies at $1.25 each for 12 or more copies. Shipping and handling costs $3.50. To order a single copy, send $2.95 plus $1 for shipping and handling. Several copies of the book can fit into a sturdy counter display stand, which costs $3. Send check or money order to Vet-Mark, 10799 Tierrasanta Blvd., San Diego, CA 92124.

Now is the time to purchase a 1985 calendar that would make a nice Christmas gift and would benefit the work of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

*Horses,* a wall calendar by Bo-Tree Productions, contains 12 full-color photographs, which horse-lovers can enjoy all year long. Each photo is accompanied by an appropriate quote. As with several other Bo-Tree Productions' calendars, a portion of the proceeds from the sale of "Horses" will be donated to The HSUS.

The new calendar measures 12 inches by 12 inches, opens to 12 inches by 24 inches, and retails for just $7.95. To order, send a check or money order to Bo-Tree Productions, 1137 San Antonio Road, Suite E, Palo Alto, CA 94303. Add $1.50 for postage. A full-color catalog is available upon request. For further information, call toll free, (800) 421-9448 (California customers, please call (415) 967-1817).

The *Address Book* lists celebrities of all kinds -- from movie stars to the oldest living man -- and would be useful to local groups when planning fund-raising events or publicity campaigns. Previously published under the name, "How To Reach Anyone Who's Anyone," the book by Michael Levine costs $5.95 plus $1.50 for shipping and handling. To order, send check or money order to Sales Department, The Putnam Publishing Group, 200 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016.

**New Pet Service Is Questionable**

*by Debbie Reed*

Northern California humane societies and shelters should beware of a new pet placement service which connects prospective pet buyers with sellers that has contacted area SPCAs, humane societies, and veterinarians for help in obtaining purebred animals.

*The Pet Connection* (60 Crane Ave., Oraville, CA 95965) is a low-cost advertiser for sellers of animals and animal services, including birds and reptiles, according to Denis O'D. and Marsha G. Gough. The group reportedly charges no fee to prospective buyers and makes no commission on animal sales, but sellers pay a registration fee to participate.

Prospective pet buyers fill out the organization's interview sheet, which requests limited information about a buyer's home and lifestyle and which specifically asks whether the buyer will consider a "rescue animal." The Goughs said they interview a prospective buyer and forward the information to the appropriate seller, who follows up on leads in which he or she is interested. "We are a profit-oriented business," said the Goughs. The couple claimed their organization had over 100 registered buyers within the first two weeks of active advertising who are specifically seeking purebred animals or those resembling a breed standard.

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) does not approve of this method of finding homes for animals and reminds humane organizations of three important points concerning animal adoptions and purebred animals:

1. With few exceptions, humane societies and animal-control departments should have their own active, organized pet adoption services, including strict requirements for housing, care, and sterilization of adopted pets; counseling as to the most appropriate pet for a prospective owner's lifestyle and needs; and a firm follow-up procedure to make certain all requirements are being met.

2. Responsible breed clubs find caring, lasting homes for the animals they raise and sell, and a prospective pet owner can likely find a purebred animal at a local animal shelter if he or she is willing to take the time to search for it.

3. Unfortunately, many people want large dogs such as Doberman pinschers, akitas, and rottweilers because they are large and can be fearsome, providing owners with ready-made guard dogs for homes or businesses. Such animals often live miserable, lonely lives while confined to chains or enclosures, are roughly handled, and are deprived of human companionship.

Your responsibility is to find responsible, loving homes for the animals in your care without the help of outside organizations that barter animals. If proper homes cannot be found in a reasonable amount of time, the animals deserve a quick, painless death.

To obtain a copy of the HSUS Guidelines for Responsible Pet Adoptions, send us 25 cents and indicate AC4001-C on your order. *Euthanasia of Dogs and Cats with Sodium Pentobarbitals* discusses how to legally procure sodium pentobarbital and provides The HSUS' reasons for recommending this substance as the most humane method of animal euthanasia. One copy costs $1. Indicate AC4027 on your order. Address all orders to The HSUS, 2100 L St. N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

**New Calendars For Animal Lovers**

A high-quality, full-color, 11 by 17 inch calendar of the horse and equestrian theme is available for those who want to support a good cause and enjoy a fine wall calendar at the same time. *Horses and Theirヤthe Address Book* lists celebrities of all kinds -- from movie stars to the oldest living man -- and would be useful to local groups when planning fund-raising events or publicity campaigns. Previously published under the name, "How To Reach Anyone Who's Anyone," the book by Michael Levine costs $5.95 plus $1.50 for shipping and handling. To order, send check or money order to Vet-Mark, 10799 Tierrasanta Blvd., San Diego, CA 92124.

**Planning Celebrity Fund-Raisers**

One new trend that has been making quite a splash in the animal welfare community is the "fund-raising" brochure. This is typically a multi-page, colorful, glossy brochure that is sold to prospective buyers with sellers that has contacted area SPCAs, humane societies, and veterinarians for help in obtaining purebred animals.

The *Address Book* lists celebrities of all kinds -- from movie stars to the oldest living man -- and would be useful to local groups when planning fund-raising events or publicity campaigns. Previously published under the name, "How To Reach Anyone Who's Anyone," the book by Michael Levine costs $5.95 plus $1.50 for shipping and handling. To order, send check or money order to Sales Department, The Putnam Publishing Group, 200 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016.
programming languages like BASIC (mentioned above). Programming languages are used by the programmer or enthusiast to communicate with the machine.

During early computer development, programmers worked directly with binary code, called "machine language programming." As you can imagine, this kind of programming was extremely time-consuming. A language was, therefore, quickly devised so that programmers could use words instead of bits to tell the computer what to do. A special program called an interpreter or compiler translates the English language version of the program into machine language. The first programming language tool of this sort was called "assembly language," and it is still in use. Now, most programming languages are called "high-level languages." They are high level because there are more and more words, with less and less machine language. Most of the languages you have heard of or have used are high-level languages: FORTRAN, COBOL, PASCAL, RPG II, PDP 11, and BASIC, for example.

Programs vary, as you can imagine. Any computer in use is working because software tells it what to do. Software can be user-written or it can be prepackaged. Some of the more popular prepackaged programs for running on micros are word processing packages (a package is a group of programs), spreadsheet applications (Lotus 1/2/3 and Visicalc are two of the most well-known), and data base packages such as DBASE II.

A data base is a collection of related data that is used in a variety of applications. It is stored in an efficient way so that different programs can use the data without much manipulation. If your computer does not have a data base application, your information is stored in files (such as a file for personnel, or other files in a filing cabinet). Each file consists of records (a record is a group of data such as name, address, city, state, zip). When not using a data base, you may have to duplicate information for use in different applications. For example, an inventory figure can be used in an inventory counting application as well as in an accounting application. Without a data base, this information might be on the computer twice, once for each application. With a data base, the information would be on the computer only once.

One popular term these days is user friendly. It means that the software makes it very easy for someone to use the features of the computer. Often this is accomplished with the help of menus or tutorials. A menu is just like a menu at a restaurant: It gives you a list of choices of operations or jobs to perform. A tutorial is a set of instructions which you view on the CRT screen that tells you how a particular application or a specific operation works, or how to run a job.

Now you're an expert! Just in case you have forgotten some of the terminology, however, the December/January issue will include a glossary of terms for your reference. Enjoy your organization's computer. It can save time and money, making it easier to control, and otherwise care for, the animals in your community.

Kay Smart is the data processing manager for The Humane Society of the United States.
IRS Recognizes Society's Clinics

by Phyllis Wright

Wright is vice president of Companion Animals for The HSUS

Don't Give Pets As Christmas Gifts

Wouldn't it be fun to give your children a pet cat or dog on Christmas day? Fun for you perhaps... but what about for the animal? A new home and family can be frightening to a cat or dog, no matter how large or how old it is. Puppies and kittens, small and delicate, are easily tired. They can be badly injured or killed when accidentally stepped upon or caught in Christmas ribbon.

Want to set a good example for your children about caring for the feelings and needs of a pet? This Christmas, surprise your family with the news that you will soon pick out a new cat or dog to love. On Christmas day, stuff the children's stockings with a brightly colored collar or leash, a book on pet care, or a booklet of pet names from which to choose.

After the Christmas rush is over, the guests have gone home, and excited children have calmed down, visit your local animal shelter. Ask a pet adoption counselor to help you choose the pet that will be happy living with your family forever.

Christmas symbolizes giving because you care. Care about your new pet. Adopt it after the holiday has ended.

Place your organization's name and address here.

Provided by The Humane Society of the United States