UNTIL THERE ARE NONE, ADOPT ONE!
A Campaign for Animal Shelters

Inside:
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**Finding More Good Homes for Animals**

For too long, the public has taken a one-way street to the animal shelter. Too many people enter the shelter with their arms full of unwanted dogs and cats. Too few come in to look for a lifelong companion.

That's exactly why the Humane Society of the United States has developed the "Until There Are None, Adopt One" campaign. Like the "Be a P.A.L.—Prevent A Litter" campaign, "Adopt One" is meant to help you shelter dismantle that "one-way" sign. In conjunction with you and your colleagues across the country, we hope to turn the tide in favor of unwanted animals, and make homeless animals the next big consumer issue. We want to persuade more people to visit the animal shelter first when they make the decision to get a companion.

Anyone who knows The HSUS knows that we're the last organization to want animals who can be wonderful, lifelong companions if given the chance by caring owners. We want to convince more responsible people to give shelter animals a chance. We're marketing responsible pet ownership. Indeed, we have developed the "Adopt One" campaign to enhance the "Adopt One...more good homes for animals" campaign.

Every shelter is the only one around for many people entering the shelter. The HSUS Vice President, Companion Animals, Marc S. Paulhus, says, "Wherever she's going to get a pet, she should assume that the pet comes from the shelter. She may not think about it, but it's the only logical assumption."

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**Shelter Sense**

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By Phyllis L. Handy, HSUS Senior Consultant

**Until There Are None, Adopt One!**

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**The Adoption Factor**

Responsible animal care and control agencies have for years concentrated on the supply side of the pet overpopulation equation, and rightly so. Reduce the numbers of animals coming into the world, and eliminate the problem as surely diminishes to meet demand.

Promoting responsible pet ownership and animal sterilization—whether through legislation, education, or financial incentives—is indeed the best long-term solution to pet overpopulation. Shelters could promote adoptions till doomsday and never hope to end the killing.

But when a scant 14 percent of all new pets obtain their companions from their local storhouses of homeless animals, there's a problem. Sadly, for whatever reasons, the vast majority of prospective pet owners are missing the connection between animal euthanasia and their decision about where to get a new pet.

That is the challenge for animal shelters. Let responsible people know that there are healthy, loving animals at your shelter waiting for good homes, and persuade more of them to adopt one.

**Behind New Pet Owners’ Decisions**

Certainly, it's difficult for many shelter personnel to understand why an individual might pay $200, $300, even $500 to a pet store or breeder when they could adopt from a shelter for well under $100. After you endured a few hours putting animals down, in fact, it is hard to accept that new pet owners support breeding operations at all.

Prospective pet owners stay away from the shelter for a variety of reasons: ignorance of the surplus animal problem. Every shelter should assume that a good number of people do not know about pet overpopulation. Think for a minute. How did you first become aware of the numbers of surplus animals and the necessity of euthanasia? Most of us learn when we begin working in this field. Then there are those few people who may know about the homeless animal problem but just don't think it's their problem.

Unfamiliarity with the animal shelter. Many people may not know there is a shelter in their community or that it is a good source for companions.

Misconceptions about the animal shelter. How many people do you...
Ruth Vedra, president of the Carolina (Elizabeth City, N.C.), noted, "The myth that purebreds make better pets is one of shelters' most difficult challenges. Even when people know about the surplus animal problem, and even after they are told about puppy mills, some still insist on going to a pet shop and getting an animal "with papers.""

The New Consumer Issue

Some of these obstacles shelters can hope to overcome are easily—many preconceived notions about shelters and shelter animals are so deeply rooted in the American psyche that they are taking decades to change. But other problems may have more achievable solutions—perhaps something as basic as correcting a shelter's lack of visibility in the community.

Shelters can bring in more people, simply by recognizing pet owners as consumers and operating accordingly. "During the past few years this country has witnessed the power of the consumer in bringing about change," said HSUS President John A. Hoyt in his announcement of the "Adopt One" campaign last April. "In numerous areas it has been the force of public opinion, and especially the resolve of massive numbers of individual buyers, that has produced profound results one would not have dreamed possible."

Just as pet overpopulation is largely a consumer issue, so shelters must more than ever begin to operate like businesses. They have to become marketers. They have to emphasize advertising, in name recognition, bring more people through their doors, maintain an attractive facility, stress customer service and present a quality "product." And yet, while doing all of this, shelters must not forget that what they are "selling" is not a product at all. It is a living, breathing, sentient animal who feels pain, requires commitment, deserves companionship, and has the potential to reproduce. Above all, shelters must remain faithful to the mandate that their animals must go only to responsible, lifelong homes. In a sentence, they must exercise their right to reject certain customers.

Shelters can increase the numbers of shelter animals finding good homes. They can maintain their adoption standards and the quality of their placements. Animal shelters can accomplish both of these things simply by striving to expand their pool of adoption applicants. They must help more prospective pet owners make that vital connection between their search for a companion and the fact that shelters are overflowing with homeless, adoptable animals.

That is the bottom line. The "Adopt One" campaign, in conjunction with the dedication and action of each individual animal shelter, is intended to help responsible, prospective pet owners make the choice to adopt a shelter animal. The ultimate goal, however, is to help more responsible people in every community looking for a pet who do not know about the animal shelters—those are the individuals shelters should be seeking to reach."

Beyond the Yellow Pages

There are as many ways to boost public awareness of shelters as there are varieties of mixed breed dogs. The most basic forms of advertisement—sizeable yellow pages ads with simple maps, directional signs, community bulletin boards, and billboards—are a good and necessary start, but most shelters have found that increasing their adoption rate substantially without compromising their standards requires much more effort.

If the shelter is to establish and maintain local awareness of its adoption services, use of the media is invaluable. The easiest way to ensure effective media coverage is to pay for it by creating a specific publicity budget. Energetic and imaginative shelters, however, have found that much can be done despite a shortage of funds. In fact, achieving free or low-cost media exposure is possible for virtually any public or private shelter.

Broadcast public service announcements (PSAs) are the easiest and cheapest advertising route to increased adoptions. Commercial radio and television stations are no longer required to meet a quota of PSAs in order to maintain their licenses, but there is usually little difficulty in obtaining some free air time for your message. "The ultimate goal, however," says Marc Paulhus, HSUS vice president for companion animals, "is to obtain prime-time coverage, and to do this you will need to persuade the station program directors to make your cause their priority."

Paulhus suggests that shelter staff meet with the PSA directors of several radio stations ("country, classical, adult contemporary, or talk radio formats are usually the most appropriate outlets for adoption PSAs because they appeal to an adult audience") and, armed with enthusiasm and compelling materials, convince them of the desperate need to promote local shelters.

SUSAN HAWLEY AND CINDY STOLL OF THE YORK COUNTY SPCA (York, Pa.) present some 10 adoptable animals each week on "Meet the Pets." Filmed at the shelter, it's the top-rated show on Cable-4 York four straight years.
need for the campaign’s success. Each radio station will require a PSA script. Shelters can easily write their own scripts and will need to list their phone numbers. When several stations are participating,” says Paulhus, “or when the announcements will be running for several months, shelters need to avoid saturating the audience with the same PSAs.” By all means, they should repeat the same slogans, such as “Get a pal for life!” or “Until there are none, adopt one.” But they will need to maintain the listeners’ interest by varying the messages monthly, or even weekly, and from station to station. This variation can be achieved by changing the focus. The emphasis can be changed, for example, from the general “adopt a pet” to the more specific “adopt a dog” or “adopt a cat,” from adopting young animals to adopting mature animals (whose personalities are more predictable and who may better suit families with kids), or from mentioning the availability of purebreds to mixed breeds.

The shelter’s appeals might also be enhanced by the inclusion of some statistical information on pet overpopulation. Agencies could cite statistics compiled locally or national stats found in The HSUS’s “Be a P.A.L.—Prevent a Litter” campaign. Shelters may also want to add a tag line to adoption PSAs such as “Come see us and fill out an application today” as a subliminal message that only responsible potential adopters need apply. For television PSAs, the most valuable hours of air-time are the evening prime-time hours of 6 to 11:00 pm, and the target group for shelters is age 25 to 65. Television stations will require either the shelter’s own PSA scripts (to be produced for free by the station) or video PSAs developed for the shelter by an independent company.

If the shelter wishes to develop its own video PSA, it will need to produce a compelling advertisement, retail companies may also agree to publicize a shelter or a specific adoption promotion in their own ads or in their stores. "A challenging but highly rewarding tactic is to capture the attention of local reporters. Shelter staff can invite reporters on tours, get to know them, and share with them the work of the shelter and its role in the community. Once a shelter has established a rapport with a local journalist or two, they are more likely to cover any events the shelter holds. Also, if an adoptable animal with an interesting or tragic story comes in to the shelter, reporters should be notified. Any positive mention of the shelter in an otherwise tragic story is sure to gain the admiration of a caring public, not to mention immediate adoption candidates for the animal.

Mitternight also suggests positive association with a local celebrity such as a mayor or television weather forecaster. If the shelter can persuade such a person to become an adoption spokesperson, it can more readily gain publicity in the local media.

Working Within the Community

The shelter, as a service organization, is part of the community and should operate as such. At every opportunity, shelters should invite community groups such as the local Junior League or Kiwanis Club to tour the shelter. Adoptions, like the shelter itself, will benefit from an educated and supportive public. The involvement of local veterinarians in shelter activities can be helpful as well. Increasingly, veterinarians are working with animal shelters to further animal protection endeavors, most notably through cooperative spay/neuter programs. Harnessing the persuasive power that veterinarians have with the pet-owning public can be a boon to your long-term efforts. Persuading vets to display shelter brochures or hang up posters that promote shelter adoptions will help encourage more pet owners to adopt their next companion.

Increasing Adoption Fees

So you want to be creative, you want to express your urgency, and you want to place more animals into lifelong homes, but you just don’t have enough money, and free or sponsored publicity just isn’t giving your shelter enough exposure.

Paulhus suggests a potential solution: evaluate your adoption fees, and think about raising them slightly to bring in funds for extra advertising and staff time. “Most shelters’ adoption fees are a bargain when compared to the costs of spaying or neutering, and advertising,” says Paulhus, “especially when the fees include the cost of a spay or neuter surgeries provided by the shelter.” Indeed, your shelter may already be subsidizing these services to some extent. Once prospective pet owners are attracted to the shelter to adopt an animal, an adoption fee that’s $5 or $10 higher to cover the cost of advertising shouldn’t cause them to go elsewhere. When the Douglas County shelter, during Adopt-A-Dog Month, reduced the price of adoptions, they found that most people chose to pay the full price anyway. “Promotion of adoptions can almost pay for itself,” says Paulhus, “because for every adoption above your shelter’s usual number, there will be extra money in the fund to offset the cost of the promotion. That’s how advertising works.”

At a parade to welcome home U.S. troops, children helped the White Island Animal Improvement Foundation (White Island, Wash.) promote adoptions.
Making Your Shelter Appeal To Prospective Pet Owners

By M. Kathleen Prevost

What we are, and to a great extent what we look like, determine other people's feelings, actions, and reactions toward us. This is no less true for physical facilities like animal shelters than it is for individuals. The sights, smells, sounds, and information that "package" your animal shelter's message may have as much to do as your stated goals and mission. People remember what you do, not what you say.

For many adopters, the only contact they'll ever have with your shelter is the time they spend selecting and applying for a companion animal. How your facility looks and feels will determine how they judge your agency. Over the long haul, adopters' positive or negative experiences will have a large impact on your shelter's overall success.

How many times have you heard, "Oh, I couldn't go to the animal shelter. It's so depressing"? Most shelters can make themselves more "user friendly" for these people simply by doing what many libraries, museums, and recreation centers have already done: borrow ideas from retail and service delivery organizations. Regardless of the funding base, your agency's operations can be streamlined, your staff can be trained and helpful, and your facility can be attractive, neat, and well-organized.

Getting There

If prospective pet owners can't find you, they can't adopt from you. Well designed and maintained road signs are vital, especially if your shelter is one of those located near the county airport or city landfill.

Public facilities or private shelters with contracts are likely entitled to have road signs funded, erected, and maintained by the city, county, or state. Many private agencies have been able to get a sign or two donated to them by local sign companies. If you have a location near a major roadway, consider putting up a billboard, reader board, or electronic sign. A long driveway can turn into a fun educational experience (remember the Burma-Shave highway ads)!

Always keep the signs looking their best. Provide plenty of well-lighted, well-marked parking. Spruce up the outside of your facility with paint and well tended landscaping. If your shelter has a government contract, find out if they have a facilities department or landscape architect who can help.

Streamlining the Adoption Process

Once potential adopters have found the shelter and have been told by many agencies to "go back and look at the animals, and if you find one you like, come up and fill out a form." Then, during the adoption interview, they proceed to tell the person that they chose the wrong animal.

Most shelters simply don't have the resources to "walk" every adopter through the entire process. But shelters that don't have adopters and give them basic information before they see any animals. Let adopters know the rules of the game before they start playing. If you can't pre-counsel or if you can station a helpful staffer or volunteer in the kennel area on a busy Saturday, at least provide them with a self-guided shelter tour and adoption checklist.

Provide separate areas for adoption, stray, and isolation animals. If that is not possible, color code the cages or floors to identify the animal's condition: sick or injured animals should be kept in an area away from adoption traffic. Present your "special" animals—older, less attractive, or "hard to adopt" ones—first. Don't let folks see the puppies until they've had a chance to see that nice, five-year-old spayed female terrier! Special, non-coercive signs can add an incentive for people to stop and look. Although they cost money and require more care, two successful ways to eliminate the "prison" feel of the typical animal shelter are to replace metal cages with those made of Plexiglas, or install colony cages. Plexiglas cages in an area will enable animal shelters to present animals in much the same way pet stores do. Properly administered, colonies can provide a pleasant environment for cats, kittens, and puppies, and show them to the public in its best light. In a public colony cage, two animals per cage should be the maximum.

A professionally designed clipper is the perfect petting surface. Paper bags, safe toys, and bedding in the cages. These items will give the shelter a homey feel and also educate adopters about the animals' behavioral needs.

Signs of the Times

Don't let the simplicity of signs fool you; their power can be substantial. Just as adopters' handwriting can instantly create a negative view of your shelter, so can attractive, style-consistent, professionally made signs promote an image that your agency really has its act together. Signs can be everywhere, and—like information packets and/or clipboards—can save staff from answering the same questions over and over again. An information "wall" in the shelter reception area can educate adopters and others alike.

Large shelters can route traffic via signs in the lobby area, separating potential adopters from lost-and-founds and surrenderers. Directional and informational signs can help in 'he kennels and catteries. All signs should be easy to read, be free of grammatical errors and misspelling, and feature a graphic component such as a logo or illustration. Show you have a sense of humor. Instead of "Don't touch the animals," try "Please don't feed your fingers to the puppies."

The Sweet Smell (And Look) of Success

Your shelter must not only be clean, it must smell clean. Odor is the number one customer turn-off. Clean doesn't mean antiseptic; a pleasant, unobtrusive odor really helps create a better environment. There is no excuse for a smelly kennel. If your shelter smells bad, change your cleaning procedures or your products.

Make your shelter pleasant to the eyes, too. Create an environment through the special use of light—try desk lamps, skylights, or track lighting. Use live plants to create a natural environment. Paint the place—a few coats of fresh paint can do wonders—and maintain a regular painting schedule. Use bright colors for office areas and dirt resistant colors for the kennels and catteries. Think mauve, cranberry, cobalt, sunflower, and plum—not grey, green, yellow, and white. Also consider providing piped-in classical music—it will not only be enjoyed by the public, but by the animals and staff as well.

People Power

Finally, don't forget that your staff's attitude will make or break the shelter experience for every prospective pet visit, including the person whose application is rejected. Develop a customer service policy and stick to it! Remember that compassion shouldn't depend on the number of legs a customer has.

Another make-or-break consideration is the number of staff you provide to help with the adoption process. Before you institute adoption promotions, make sure you have enough adoption counselors and/or volunteers to meet the increased shelter traffic. Few things anger people more than visiting the shelter on a precious Saturday and having to wait an extra hour just to meet with an adoption counselor.

Every shelter can be clean, odor-free, pleasant, and educational. A few gallons of paint, some new signs, a grounds clean-up, and, most importantly, a well-trained, informative, friendly staff aren't expensive. Making your shelter the place people choose to visit for their animal services needs, including the place to adopt a new companion, just takes new ideas and commitment.
TRENDING THE LINE BETWEEN ADOPTION STANDARDS AND INDIVIDUAL APPLICANTS

By Robin Weirauch, Program Coordinator
HNCS of Los Angeles Register Office

Many of today’s potential pet parents are surely asking themselves, “Whatever happened to the days when you could stroll into a dimly lit dog pound, point out the dog of your choice, slap down a couple bucks, and be home with a new dog in time for supper?”

The fact is, today’s person who wants to bring home a four-legged friend from a responsible humane shelter will be forced to think very carefully about their intentions.

We who work in animal shelters know that some folks resent this. They feel that owning a dog or cat is an American right, spelled out in the constitution right after the part about “bearing arms.”

Now more than ever, the American public is being asked to adopt pets from shelters rather than buy animals from profit-making businesses. But many humane shelters are being attacked for their strict adoption policies and procedures. Critics argue that the real reason so many animals are being euthanized is not the overpopulation problem, but that the shelter is not adopting out enough animals.

Shelters are accused of being too demanding, sometimes pompous, and even apathetic about turning down an adoption, even when euthanasia is inevitable.

It is still going to take some time for people to get used to the idea that pet ownership is a privilege, not a right. In the meantime, however, it may be prudent for shelters to conduct an adoption self-examination if the public has expressed discontent.

Is it possible that in an effort to place animals in only truly quality homes, you have become slightly regimented, possessive of the animals, or inflexible with the public? Have you gone a tad overboard in the expectations department? Is the public being alienated?

It’s worth examining, but don’t worry. A “too tough” image can be improved without compromising essential adoption standards.

Drawing Parallels to Humans

Many of you have heard someone sarcastically remark that trying to adopt an animal is like trying to adopt a human child. Curiosity finally got the best of me recently and I decided it was time to find out just how close this statement is to the truth.

An adoption counselor at a social services agency agreed to talk with me about the adoption process for human children.

Although there are many similarities between human and animal adoptions, let me assure you that shelters can honestly say that adoptions of animals are much less complicated and involved than those for humans. One major point, however, came to light: The real task facing human adoption agencies is to get to know potential parents through several conversations/interviews to ascertain some very basic but essential qualities.

These agencies are not looking for “perfect parents.” Instead, they wish to ensure that the parents want a child for the right reasons, that they will stick to the job of
Have you been (to the animal shelter) lately? It’s a whole new ballgame. Twelve years ago we walked in, picked out a puppy, wrote a check for $15, and left. In the late summer of 1991, we went to the shelter, picked out two kittens, said, “We’ll take those home,” and were told, “You’ll take them home three days from now, after we’ve checked you out.”

—Washington Post columnist Jonathan Yardley

Parenting for better or for worse, and that they are basically caring people able to handle the monumental task of parenting—emotionally, spiritually, and financially. The agency is far less concerned with the details of daily parenting skills. The parents are not required to pass a “parenting test,” but instead receive on-the-job training. They’re encouraged to seek advice or assistance from the agency as needed.

**Identify with Adopters**

During the course of many shelter visits, I have had the opportunity to discuss and observe numerous adoption procedures and review adoption paperwork. It’s often been helpful to view these adoption sessions from the applicant’s perspective. In many instances, the experience appeared to leave the prospect tense and defensive. Some times, an inordinate amount of information was thrust upon the person. Many adoption counselors did not attempt to get to know the applicant, except through yes or no answers on the adoption questionnaire. Some interviews were conducted without privacy.

So how do you reduce the public’s resentment of being qualified as pet parents without lowering your adoption standards or giving away free televisions? Basically, you have to make the adoption application process non-intimidating, less of a “you’ll only get an animal if you measure up” scenario, and more like “let’s see if we can work out something that will be suitable for you, your lifestyle, and the animal.”

Obviously, you have to ask people questions in one way or another; adoption questionnaires continue to be very useful tools. If you require that the applicant fill out a written questionnaire, use the answers on the questionnaire as a springboard for discussion. If the questionnaire is completed verbally, engage the person in conversation first and weave the routine questions in as opportunities arise, instead of grinding through the questions like a pre-flight check list. You’ll end up learning more about the applicant while putting him or her at ease.

**The Three C’s**

What we really need to know about an adoption applicant can be boiled down to three criteria, which I’ll call the three “C’s”: 1) commitment to the life and needs of the animal, to being (or becoming) a responsible pet owner; 2) willingness to make adjustments when trouble arises; 2) compassion, and a desire for mutual companionship instead of utility (e.g., mouser, guard dog, yard ornament); and 3) capability of providing the essentials of a healthy, happy life for the animal (adequate finances, time, appropriate living quarters, etc.).

Finding out if someone possesses the three C’s requires a sincere and friendly attempt to get to know the applicant through pleasant conversation in a private environment. The interviewer must set aside any negative feelings about humans in general. The human came to your shelter instead of a pet store or backyard breeder, and needs help in making an intelligent decision about a long-term and important personal and part of his or her life. You need to accept that this person may not fit into your mold of a perfect pet owner in terms of their knowledge of animals or even past experiences. But if they are harboring those three C’s somewhere inside, you can help them become a better or more knowledgeable pet owner.

A friendly approach can help them enjoy a wonderful relationship with an animal (maybe for the first time) by offering solutions to past problems and guiding them to the most appropriate choices. By showing a sincere interest in helping them, you can turn a “Mr. Gec, I didn’t realize how pleasant-life could-be-with-a-sterilized-dog, or even a “Ms. I’m glad they talked to me-about-waiting until the kids are older.”

Inevitably, some adoptors don’t feel as right as others. In these situations, you may be able to work out a mutually acceptable solution with a little flexibility contributed by both parties. The majority of people will recognize that you are trying to be fair and honest, and they will appreciate being given the individual attention.

Granted, not all adoption standards can afford any flexibility (sterilization, for example). However, completely rigid standards with no exceptions can cause ill-will and the loss of some basically sound adoptions. On the down side, flexibility may require that you make a stronger commitment to adoption follow-ups. Home visits may be required, before or after an adoption in some circumstances.

Naturally, you will still have to tell some people no. However, if treated with respect and honesty, those people can leave the shelter with their egos intact and their “feathers smooth.” And maybe, just maybe, they will have learned something about themselves and your shelter’s objectives that will have a positive effect on them.

At a time when people in the humane movement are being criticized for being excessively pro-animal and anti-human, it might serve well to take a close look at the way people who are interested in sharing their lives with a shelter animal are being treated. Are you providing the public with pet services such as ownership training, friendly family pet counseling, and matchmaking? Does the imaginary welcome mat on your shelter’s doorspeck say “Thanks for coming to our shelter, how may we help you?” or does it say “Go ahead, make my day!”? Regardless of whether your shelter has a Mr. Rogers or a Clint Eastwood style of human relations, you can be sure it affects public perception, attitude, and ultimately, your agency’s overall success.

**Suggested Adoption Interview Questions**

Unlike a human adoption agency, you will not often have the opportunity to make any home visits for prospective pet parents. Most shelter adoption decisions are based on interpersonal communications. Keep in mind that it will be much more difficult for someone to deceive you if they have to converse instead of just saying yes or no. The following questions may help to get people to open up about themselves:

1. So what brings you to our shelter for a dog/cat?
2. Is there any particular reason you prefer a dog/cat/puppy/kitten?
3. Is there a particular age in dogs/cats you enjoy most (or least)? Why?
4. What kinds of pets do you find hard to deal with?
5. What kinds of behavior do you feel unable to accept?
6. What would you likely to turn down a particular animal?
7. What do you see as normal puppyhood/kittenhood problems (or adult pet problems)?
8. What will you expect of the pet you adopt?
9. What do you think the pet will expect of you?
10. What leisure time activities do your family enjoy together?
11. What kinds of activities do you see yourself doing with an adopted pet?
12. Will the whole family share in the care of the pet?
13. Tell me about a typical day in your household (hctic schedule, kids busy with lessons, gone 16 hours a day, etc.)
14. Tell me about some of your past (or present) pets.
15. Did your family have pets when you were a child? Tell me about the experiences. Is there anything you would do differently than your parents did in raising pets?
16. Describe your neighborhood for me in terms of the pets living there (Are there lots of dogs and cats already? Are there nuisance problems? Do you and your neighbors get along?)
17. How do you feel about pet sterilization? Have you ever had any of your pets spayed or neutered? Do you have any concerns or questions about sterilization?
18. How do you feel about signing a legal contract agreeing to sterilization, pet owner responsibility, etc.? (This may give you all idea if the person objects to having to sign anything, and why. You may be able to pre-determine folks who need careful follow-up.)

Find out if potential adoptors possess the three C’s—commitment, compassion, and capability.
Put away stereotypes and treat every potential adopter with the same fairness, honesty, respect, and compassion.

Ask them to review a certain video, or take home a pamphlet and give some more thought to whether this is really the best time to get a pet. You haven’t said no, you just want to avoid unpleasant mistakes for the family and the animal.

Remember that you have not always been a perfect pet owner. Don’t be too judgmental of other people who have made mistakes in the past.

Try to educate the applicant about good pet ownership without being condescending or pushy.

Offer to help the applicant become a better pet owner, e.g., "We have information about a better way to handle a chronic digger. Would you be interested in hearing about it?"

Show people how they will benefit from the adoption standards, e.g., “Having to return an animal to the shelter would be a very unpleasant experience for you and your kids. We want to help you avoid that.”

Examine your tone of voice and the way you ask the questions. Record an interview sometime and ask yourself how you would have felt had you been on the opposite side of the table.

Try to make people feel comfortable enough with you that they would return or ask for help with problems.

Never refer a denied applicant to a pet shop, the classifieds, or another shelter. If you have to deny an adoption, be honest but polite about the reasons. You want to show the person that you are concerned about any animal who may be adopted or purchased.

Make sure your adoption contract does not ask people to accept unreasonable terms. Would you sign a contract that included one of the following clauses (taken from actual adoption contracts)?

1. If the previous owner of a stray comes forward within 30 days after the adoption, the new owner may have to give up the pet.
2. The family could be liable for any other expenses incurred by anyone involved in resolving a breach of contract problem.

The owner is required to reimburse the society for a specified amount of money if the animal is ever lost, killed, or dies before its normal life expectancy is reached.

The humane society really cared who adopted this dog.

—Anonymous, from 1991 member survey by the Humane Society of Huron Valley, Michigan, in response to a question about the society’s adoption process.

TIPS FOR SMOOTHER, MORE SUCCESSFUL ADOPTIONS

1. Prepare a friendly information sheet on adoptions at your shelter. This will help people feel at ease so that everyone is being treated equally, and allow them to plan their time when they are ready. Point out that they will be required to sign a legal contract.

2. Find out if the potential adopter is “just looking” and has some questions, or whether they are ready to spend some time for the actual adoption process; this can save your staff a great deal of time.

3. Provide a comfortable, private place for the interview. Keep distractions and interruptions to a minimum.

4. Make the interview a conversation, not an interrogation.

5. Decide on an opening line for your interviews; something you feel comfortable saying to get things started off right on the foot. Ask questions that will get people to share feelings and experiences, and not just cut and dried facts. Say, “Tell me about the other pets you’ve lived with...” instead of, “Do you have a fenced-in yard?”

7. Share personal experiences now and then when applicable. It will ease any tensions, and show them that people can learn and improve as pet owners. When you reveal information about yourself, they will be more likely to do the same.

8. Let the interviewee talk without too much interruption. Be careful not to let your face or actions indicate that you are disturbed by what you are hearing; the speaker will become defensive and withhold further information.

9. Listen closely to the interviewee. Much can be learned about their personal qualities, and you can ask follow-up questions easily.

10. Don’t be afraid to slow people down. People who are bent on taking an animal home immediately may require a closer look.

11. Remember that you have not always been a perfect pet owner. Don’t be too judgmental of people who have made mistakes in the past.

12. Try to educate the applicant about good pet ownership without being condescending or pushy.

13. Offer to help the applicant become a better pet owner, e.g.,

“Have we information about a better way to handle a chronic digger. Would you be interested in hearing about it?”

14. Show people how they will benefit from the adoption standards, e.g., “Having to return an animal to the shelter would be a very unpleasant experience for you and your kids. We want to help you avoid that.”

15. Examine your tone of voice and the way you ask the questions. Record an interview sometime and ask yourself how you would have felt had you been on the opposite side of the table.

16. Try to make people feel comfortable enough with you that they would return or ask for help with problems.

17. Never refer a denied applicant to a pet shop, the classifieds, or another shelter. If you have to deny an adoption, be honest but polite about the reasons. You want to show the person that you are concerned about any animal who may be adopted or purchased.

18. Make sure your adoption contract does not ask people to accept unreasonable terms. Would you sign a contract that included one of the following clauses (taken from actual adoption contracts)?

1. If the previous owner of a stray comes forward within 30 days after the adoption, the new owner may have to give up the pet.
2. The family could be liable for any other expenses incurred by anyone involved in resolving a breach of contract problem.

The owner is required to reimburse the society for a specified amount of money if the animal is ever lost, killed, or dies before its normal life expectancy is reached.

The humane society really cared who adopted this dog.

—Anonymous, from 1991 member survey by the Humane Society of Huron Valley, Michigan, in response to a question about the society’s adoption process.

HUMANE SOCIETIES, PET STORES WORK TOGETHER TO INCREASE ADOPTIONS

I wanted to be part of the solution, instead of part of the problem,” says Paul Chakroff, stroking the head of a squirming brown puppy at Animal Fair Pet Center in Columbus, Ohio. Along with four assorted kittens, who sleep in furry heaps in pens a few feet away, the puppy is from the Capital Area Humane Society and a participant in an unusual adoption program.

Chakroff, owner of the shop, offers his customers the option of adopting a humane society animal right out of his store.

After purchasing Animal Fair in November of 1987, Chakroff decided to discontinue the sale of purebred puppies and kittens. “That side of the business had always disturbed me,” he said. Yet Chakroff missed having the animals in the store, since customers enjoy seeing the kittens and puppies. His solution was to approach the humane society and volunteer space and staff to adoptable cats and dogs.

“We were delighted,” says Gerri Bain, executive director of the Capital Area Humane Society. Indeed, Animal Fair’s participation is a boon to the society, whose far south side location is inconvenient to north-end residents. In operation since April 1988, the Animal Fair Adoption Option has placed over 2,500 animals. In fact, from January 1 through October 31, 1991, the pet store accounted for a whopping 37 percent of the society’s adoptions, with an average 115 adoptions per month.

“Our problem has been to keep up with demand,” says Chakroff.

Significantly, the society has not lost control of adoptions. At Animal Fair, “All adoptions are administered exactly as they are here (at the shelter),” says Bain, including an interview with the potential adopter.

Animal Fair takes no commission, sending the adoption fees directly to the society, which in turn delivers the animals and provides all food and bedding. Humane society volunteers frequently spend morning and evening hours helping clean...
and feed the animals. To keep up with the program’s exponential growth, the society actually assigned a paid counselor to help with Animal Fair adoptions Fridays through Sundays. Chakroff and three animal Fair staffers are trained to handle adoptions as well.

For Animal Fair, says Chakroff, the benefits of the program are either direct, in the form of good will and interest in the store, or direct, from sale of supplies and food bought in conjunction with the adoption. Chakroff is the first to admit that he lost money the first year directly, from sale of supplies and food bought in conjunction with the adoption. Chakroff is the first to admit that he lost money the first year of animal programs, having given up $25,000 in gross annual income from the sale of purebreds. But if one’s will and interest in the store, or adoption, Chakroff is the first to admit, “A marketing success, but it’s also a moral success for the animals.”

Two Similar Programs

Although the most far-reaching, the Capital Area Humane Society—Animal Fair program is not the only one of its kind. Retailers, a pet supply boutique, displayed animals for the Washington (D.C.) Humane Society for years before relocating to Bethesda, Maryland, earlier this year. That store, along with three other pet supply stores and a pet shop that agreed to sell raincoats for purebreds, now displays animals for the Montgomery County (MD) Humane Society (MCHS). The Animal Protection Society (APS) of Orange County, North Carolina, also has animals displayed by a local pet store. During October 1991, the first month of its cooperative program with Dubey’s Pet World, APS adopted out 22 animals through the store—about half the animals transported there. “All the animals taken to Dubey’s had already used up their time at the shelter,” noted APS director Pat Sanford.

Both MCHS and APS handle the adoptions at the animal shelter, and require a 24-hour holding period to discourage impulsive adoptions.

Cooperative arrangements between animal shelters and pet stores can help more puppies find a good home.

April is still

April is still

April 1992 will be the fifth annual “Be a P.A.L.—Prevent a Litter” Month, and local humane groups and animal shelters are encouraged to maintain their emphasis on educating the public about pet overpopulation and the importance of spaying and neutering.

The “Be a P.A.L.” campaign, in tandem with the “Adopt One” campaign, can help shelters attract pet overpopulation from both sides. Speaking in fact, that wish to promote adoptions and spay/neuter simultaneously during April. The “Be a P.A.L.” campaign Kit is available for $3.95 from HSUS, 2100 L St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20037.

World Pet Products, a trade publication, profiled the program, which was doing. Turns out he had just adopted the pup, and the poor animal reeked so badly that his new owner didn’t want to risk smelling up the inside of his car. So I went back in to the shelter manager and asked her, “If you treat animals like dirtbikes, how do you expect your adopters to do any better?”

—Phyllis Wright, HSUS Senior Consultant
Adopting a Dog? MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE!

There’s one problem with adopting a dog from an animal shelter: the selection of available canine companions can overwhelm you! Man’s best friends come in all shapes, sizes, and, of course, personalities. The good news is that almost any shelter dog can make a wonderful, lifelong companion for you and your family. The bad news is that some of these bundles of energy may make less appropriate pets for you than others.

The key is simply knowing what to look for! Here are a few things to think about:

Examine Yourself
Choosing the right dog generally means identifying the type of animal which matches your lifestyle and wants. If you live alone in a small, third-floor apartment, for instance, adopting a large, active retriever mix might not be the best choice. Conversely, if you have a family of four and are looking for a companion to match your active family lifestyle, such an animal may be the perfect choice. A dog’s size, requirements, friendliness, assertiveness, and compatibility with children should all figure into your decision.

Learn About Different Breeds and Mixes
So how do you know what kinds of dogs will have the qualities you’re looking for? The best way to find out is to learn about various breeds, visit with animals at the shelter, and speak with an adoption counselor for guidance. Most animal shelters have plenty of mixed breeds, in fact, are often considered to be the most popular and common cats. One thing to keep in mind is that long-haired cats require frequent brushing and will look forward to this daily ritual with you.

Adopting a Cat? MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE!

Choosing a Pal for Life
Every dog in the shelter can provide you with boundless love and companionship, and every dog certainly deserves a lifelong home. But some dogs are better for you than others. That’s why you should take the time to make a thoughtful choice. After all, you’re choosing a pal who’ll be with you 10, 15, or even more years. Select the right dog, and you and your new companion will enjoy those years to the fullest.

Adopt a Cat for Life
Finally, remember that you’re making a commitment to love and care for your new pet for his or her lifetime—which could mean 10, 15, even 20 years. So choose your new pal carefully and be a responsible pet owner. In no time at all, you’ll know how wonderful sharing your home with a cat can be.
TAKE A SECOND LOOK! Consider Adopting an Adult Cat or Dog

W e know what you’re thinking. Those puppies and kittens are so cute, they’re almost impossible to pass up. When you see those playful balls of fluff with their soulful eyes, how can you choose to adopt a mature animal instead? But please give us a few moments of your time. Give us a chance to convince you to adopt an older pet instead. We guarantee you won’t be sorry!

Be a Lifesaver

Why do you come to an animal shelter to adopt your pet? Most likely, one of the reasons was to save an animal’s life. And that’s exactly what you are doing when you adopt an older pet. Adoptions of all ages increase the capacity of the shelter to continue to save lives. And that’s exactly what you are doing when you adopt an older pet! We know what you’re thinking. Those puppies and kittens will be a lot of fun. But have you considered adopting an older cat or dog? There are so many cute and playful, happy and friendly adults that are waiting to share with their new family.

A Smooth Transition

When you think about adopting a puppy or kitten, you might imagine that it will always be happy and playful, with their tails wagging and their eyes bright. And that’s exactly what you are doing when you adopt an older pet! We know what you’re thinking. Those puppies and kittens will be a lot of fun. But have you considered adopting an older cat or dog? There are so many cute and playful, happy and friendly adults that are waiting to share with their new family.

A Second Chance

There are plenty of adult animals at the shelter, each with his or her own story of disappointment and betrayal. Maybe their past owners thought they were too big and no longer “cute.” Maybe they wandered out of their yard and got lost, and their owners didn’t bother to look for them. Maybe their owners moved and didn’t take them along.

Whatever the reason, they’re at the shelter because they’ve no longer wanted. But there are plenty of good reasons to adopt them.

Sure, puppies and kittens are cute and can make wonderful pets. Older animals, though, may be more appropriate for you.

Won’t you consider opening your heart and home and giving them a second chance? Somebody needs to praise when he does well, too! Sign up for a local dog obedience class, and you’ll learn what a joy it is to have a well-trained dog.

WHAT NEXT? Bringing Your New Dog Home

S o you’ve taken the plunge and adopted a dog of your very own? Congratulations! But what do you do now? Do you think you’re excited and looking forward to forging a lifelong friendship with your new buddy. But try to keep in mind the confusion he is feeling right now. Whatever his past history, coming home with you is a new experience. He is likely to be a little disoriented, wondering where he is and what’s happening.

The key to helping your new dog make a successful adjustment to your home is being prepared and being patient. After all, they’ve lived a lifetime in a shelter, each with his or her own story of disappointment and betrayal. Maybe their past owners thought they were too big and no longer “cute.” Maybe they wandered out of their yard and got lost, and their owners didn’t bother to look for them. Maybe their owners moved and didn’t take them along.

Whatever the reason, they’re at the shelter because they’ve no longer wanted. But there are plenty of good reasons to adopt them.

Take a look at the shelter, each with his or her own story of disappointment and betrayal. Maybe their past owners thought they were too big and no longer “cute.” Maybe they wandered out of their yard and got lost, and their owners didn’t bother to look for them. Maybe their owners moved and didn’t take them along.

Whatever the reason, they’re at the shelter because they’ve no longer wanted. But there are plenty of good reasons to adopt them.

A Friend for Life

Finally, be reasonable in your expectations. Life with your dog is a different experience for your new companion, so give him time to adjust. You’ll soon find out that you’ve made a friend for life. No one will ever greet you with as much enthusiasm or provide you with as much unconditional love and loyalty as your dog will. Be patient, and you will be amply rewarded.
WHAT NEXT? Bringing Your New Cat Home

Congratulations! You are the proud new owner of a cat. Your excitement and joy will no doubt bring you to tears of happiness and joy. But what do you do now?

The first thing you should know about your new pet is that most cats hate to travel. As you drive home from the animal shelter, he will, most likely, not be in the mood for fun. For the trip home, confine your pet in a sturdy cat carrier. Don’t let him loose in your car where he might panic and cause an accident.

After the ride home from the shelter. Don’t leave him loose in your car where he might panic and cause an accident.

Come home, and make sure they are up-to-date on their shots—including feline leukemia—and in general health before introducing your new cat.

Take your new cat to the veterinarian within a week after adoption. There, he will receive a health check and any needed vaccinations. If your cat has not been spayed or neutered, make that appointment! There are already far too many unwanted kittens and cats; don’t let your new pet add to the problem. Most likely, the first period of time. Dogs crave and require companionship, and they should stay inside with the family whenever possible.

Your new cat will need to learn the basic house rules. Provide your cat with some “basic training” to help him get along in your home. It’s true that cats usually have their own ideas about how to do things. Even so, most cats can be taught to obey some simple rules like not scratching the couch, eating plants, or jumping up on the kitchen counter. With repeated, gentle, and consistent training, your cat will learn.

Cleanliness. Your new cat will need to learn some house rules. Provide your cat with some “basic training” to help him get along in your home. It’s true that cats usually have their own ideas about how to do things. Even so, most cats can be taught to obey some simple rules like not scratching the couch, eating plants, or jumping up on the kitchen counter. With repeated, gentle, and consistent training, your cat will learn.

Room for Fun. Finally, provide your cat with an interesting indoor environment. Many cats love to play with feathers, paper bags can provide hours of fun. A nice, comfortable perch by a window can become your cat’s very own “spay” station.

Do not let your cat get too used to living indoors. A good life is only possible with the help of a loving owner. Your new cat will need to learn the basic house rules. Provide your cat with some “basic training” to help him get along in your home. It’s true that cats usually have their own ideas about how to do things. Even so, most cats can be taught to obey some simple rules like not scratching the couch, eating plants, or jumping up on the kitchen counter. With repeated, gentle, and consistent training, your cat will learn.

Enjoy Your Rewards. Now that you’ve made certain the basic provisions are in place, you can relax and enjoy your new pet. It may take a couple of weeks for him to adjust to life with you. But before you know it, you’ll both be curled up on the couch together, watching TV like old pals, and you won’t even remember what life was like without him.

Health Care. Animal shelters take in animals with widely varying backgrounds, some of whom have not been vaccinated. Inevitably, despite the best efforts of shelter workers, viruses can spread and may occasionally go home with adopted animals. If you already have a cat at home, make sure they are up-to-date on their shots—including feline leukemia—and in general health before introducing your new cat.

To make his transition to your household as comfortable as possible, select a quiet, clean area such as your卧 房 or a small room away from the main foot traffic, and place the litter box in a convenient place. Over a few days, slowly introduce him to the rest of your house, including the other pets and household members. It will take a little while, but he will eventually begin to feel at home.

House Rules. Provide your cat with some “basic training” to help him get along in your home. It’s true that cats usually have their own ideas about how to do things. Even so, most cats can be taught to obey some simple rules like not scratching the couch, eating plants, or jumping up on the kitchen counter. With repeated, gentle, and consistent training, your cat will learn.

When yaking your new cat out for a walk, always use a cat carrier. Carts are naturally fastidious and most will instinctively use a litter box. For some, you may need to place the cat in the box and make little scratching motions with your hand to give him the idea. Place such a litter box or toilet on your floor. If you have your pet spayed or neutered anyway. If you need more information about why it is so important to spay your cat, please ask at the shelter.

No matter what your cat has been spayed or neutered, you should be aware of the possibility of uterine or ovarian cancer and greatly reduces the incidence of breast cancer, particularly when your dog is spayed before her first estrus cycle. Neutering reduces the possibility of uterine and ovarian cancer and prostate disease. Neutered pets are also less likely to bite, run away, or get into fights. To top it all off, dogs who are spayed or neutered not only live longer and healthier lives, but also make better, more affectionate companions.

Neutering is a one-time surgery with a one-time cost. But both procedures offer a lifetime of benefits. When it comes right down to it, if you can’t afford to have your dog spayed or neutered, then you can’t afford to have a dog.

Keep Your Dog Healthy. It’s time to give your dog some “basic training” to help him get along in your home. It’s true that dogs usually have their own ideas about how to do things. Even so, most dogs can be taught to obey some simple rules like not scratching the couch, eating plants, or jumping up on the kitchen counter. With repeated, gentle, and consistent training, your dog will learn.

A One-time Surgery, A Lifetime Benefit. “Spaying” and “neutering” are words you’re probably familiar with. What may be surprising to hear is that having your dog spayed or your male dog neutered is the single most important step you can take to be a responsible pet owner.

Spaying your female dog is to have her ovaries and uterus surgically removed. To neuter your male dog is to have his testicles removed. The result of both operations is that your companion will no longer add to the problem of unwanted pets and cats. But before you know it, it’ll be your new cat’s turn to adjust. Eventually, you’ll both be curled up on the couch together, watching TV like old pals, and you won’t even remember what life was like without him.
When allowed to roam, they can get into garbage cans, defecate in flower beds and sandboxes, cause traffic accidents, and contribute to pet overpopulation. In addition, they can have a devastating effect on local wildlife—killing dozens, even hundreds, of songbirds and small mammals every year.

Of course, the most important reason to keep your cat inside is for his own safety. Unlike dogs, cats don’t need much space to exercise and a litter box will meet those needs. In other words, cats don’t need to go outside and face disease, cat fights, dog fights, poisons, parasites, cruel people, and the biggest cat-killer of all, traffic.

Cats who live indoors from the start will never have the urge to roam around outside. Even cats who’ve previously been indoor/outdoor pets can be trained to accept being inside all the time.

Keeping cats happy inside is simply a matter of creating a healthy and stimulating indoor environment. Some good ideas are giving your cat toys that feel furry or feathery, high, planting pots of indoor greens for him to chew on, adopting another animal to keep him company, and, most importantly, playing games and spending time with your companion.

If cats have their owners’ love and attention and lots to do inside, they won’t miss the great outdoors, which, after close examination, isn’t so great for cats after all.

A One-time Surgery, A Lifetime Benefit

"Spaying" and "neutering" are words you’re probably familiar with. What you may not know is that these procedures are the most essential part of being a responsible pet owner.

To spay your female cat is to have her ovaries and uterus surgically removed. To neuter your male cat is to have his testicles removed. The result of both operations is that your pet will no longer be able to bring more homeless animals into the world. That’s significant indeed when you consider the fact that nearly eight million dogs and cats have to be humanely destroyed each year for lack of good homes.

Spaying and neutering are also better for your pet. Spaying eliminates the possibility of uterine or ovarian cancer and greatly reduces the incidence of breast cancer, particularly when your cat is spayed before her first estrous cycle. Neutering reduces the incidence of prostate cancer and prostate disorders. Neutered cats are also less likely to spray and mark territory, and spayed cats will no longer go through annoying heat cycles. To top it all off, in addition to living longer, healthier lives, cats who are spayed or neutered make better, more affectionate companions.

Spaying or neutering is a one-time surgery with a one-time cost. But both procedures offer a lifetime of benefits. When it comes right down to it, if you can’t afford to have your cat spayed or neutered, then you can’t afford to have a cat.

Collar and Tag Your Cat

No matter how careful cat owners are, there’s always the chance their companion may slip out the door and become lost. If that happened to your cat, would it be protected by a collar and identification tag?

An ID tag is a lost cat’s ticket home. The tag should include your address as well as daytime and evening telephone numbers. It should be attached to a collar of the breakaway variety so that the cat can escape if the collar becomes snagged. The shelter should have more information about where you can obtain a cat collar and tag.

Keep Your Cat Healthy

Cats, like their canine counterparts, require basic care to stay healthy and happy.

A regular, nutritionally balanced diet is as important for your cat as it is for you. Shelter personnel or your own veterinarian can guide you in choosing an adequate feeding program.

If you don’t yet have a veterinarian, it’s a good idea to establish a rapport with one soon after you adopt a cat. The shelter may provide a list of local vets, or you can ask a pet-owning friend for a referral. Keep your feline companion up-to-date on his shots, and maintain a periodic examination schedule.

A Lifetime Commitment

Beyond those essentials, the rest should come naturally, and you can look forward to many years of companionship with your four-footed friend. Remember that a pet is your responsibility to love and care for from the day he arrives until the day he dies. It’s up to you to provide him with a "lifetime guarantee."
"ADOPT ONE" CAMPAIGN ORDER FORM

Use this handy order form to obtain copies of the poster, brochure, and special issue of Shelter Sense—all created for your shelter’s own “Until There Are None, Adopt One” campaign.

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<td>Special “Adopt One” Shelter Sense</td>
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Make checks payable to The Humane Society of the United States. Do not send cash in the mail. Allow four to six weeks for delivery. We ship UPS; please include street address. Enclose payment with this order and mail to: The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L St., N.W., Washington, DC 20037. All orders must be prepaid and will be filled while supplies last.

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Name
Address
City
State
Zip

Daytime telephone

The Humane Society of the United States
2100 L Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20037

Address Correction Requested