

ADOPTION AND RESCUE

Adopting one?

What You Should Know About Adopting - Are dogs and cats in shelters healthy and well-adjusted? Most shelters screen animals for serious health and behavior problems. Even with the best-behaved animal, however, you should expect to go through a period of adjustment as your pet becomes used to a new home, family, and routine. No animal, no matter where he comes from, will be completely free of health and behavior problems. But if you give your new family member some time, training, and patience, your reward will be a loving companion.

Are there requirements following the adoption of a dog or cat? Yes! Most shelters require adopted animals to be spayed or neutered, either before they leave the shelter or within a specified period of time. Every animal companion must have regular veterinary care and be properly licensed. Be sure your dog or cat always wears a collar with an identification tag. Provide nutritious food and fresh water for your pet. Make time for exercise, training, and play. A companion animal brings rewards and responsibilities.

Do shelters have purebred animals? The HSUS estimates that 25 percent of the animals in shelters nationwide are purebred. If you're interested in a specific breed, ask if your local shelter keeps a waiting list of people interested in purebred animals. Even if it does not, you may be able to find an animal that has traits that are similar to those of the breed you have in mind.

Aren't all shelter animals just "secondhand" pets? Many shelter animals are puppies and kittens who will be starting their lives as companions. Many of the older dogs and cats had previous owners. While you may have to re-educate these animals to some degree, they already may have been housetrained and obedience trained. Remember, companion animals are remarkably adaptable and have a boundless capacity for love. Just because they lived with someone else doesn't mean they wouldn't make a wonderful companion for you!

What's the best way to find an animal shelter? Animal shelters are called by a variety of names, so look in the yellow pages of your phone book under such listing as "animal shelter," "humane society," or "animal control." Public animal care and control agencies often are listed under the city or county health department or police department. Shelter policies and procedures may vary, but all shelters have animals waiting for loving homes.

Is it difficult to adopt from a shelter? Every shelter has its own adoption policies. The best are designed to ensure that each animal is placed with a responsible person - someone prepared to make a lifelong commitment - and to avoid the kinds of problems that cause animals to be brought to a shelter. An important part of the adoption process is to match the lifestyle and needs of the adopter with the personality and behavior of the dog or cat. If this process seems overly strict, remember that the shelter's first priority is the animal.

Pet Adoption and the Overpopulation Problem - Each one of us can help stop the tragedy of too many pets by taking three simple steps:

- Adopt your next companion animal from a shelter so no more healthy animals have to die simply because they aren't enough homes for them all.
- Have all your pets spayed or neutered. Preventing more births is critical to breaking the overpopulation cycle.
- Be a responsible pet owner. Protect your pets with current identification tags and don't let them roam.

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