

Adopting from the Humane Society

When you adopt a pet from an animal shelter or humane society, you give a second chance to a friend in need. But the pets aren't the only ones who benefit – you benefit too! Adopting a pet will bring you the warmth of a faithful friend and the satisfaction of knowing you helped give the gift of life to a loving animal.

Pets may be surrendered or admitted to animal shelters for a variety of reasons, some of them being beyond the original owners' control. Sometimes the original owners find that previously unknown allergies prevent them from living with the pets. Other times the original owners may be required to move or relocate to new housing that does not allow pets. Additionally, members of the armed services may have no choice but to surrender a pet that would not otherwise receive the care and attention it needs while its owner is called away to duty. However, in other cases the pets may be admitted to animal shelters for more unfortunate reasons such as the owners growing tired of caring for the pets, or in worst case scenarios, the pets may be seized from their original owners on account of abuse, cruelty, or neglect.

Sometimes animals without proper supervision or identification can escape and become stray. The number of stray pets in the United States in general is incalculable, but according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), the number of stray cats alone is estimated to be around 70 million*. These stray pets may or may not be recovered by their owners, or they may be surrendered to animal shelters to be adopted out to new owners. What is known is that only about 10% of all animals brought into animal shelters are spayed or neutered*. This means that until those animals are brought into the shelters, they may be giving birth to litters of puppies or kittens, thereby creating even more homeless animals that will in turn continue the cycle of animal homelessness. By contrast, around 75% of owned pets are spayed or neutered*. Adopting a pet from an animal shelter helps to stop this cycle of homelessness. At the Western Pennsylvania Humane Society, all pets that are adopted out are spayed or neutered, thereby saving the new owners the cost and hassle of these medical procedures, and all adopted pets also receive permanent microchip identification.

Homeless pets are also at risk for a large number of dangers, including malnutrition, infections, diseases, injuries, predation by other animals, cruelty by uncaring humans, and traffic-related and other accidents. By contrast, adopted animals live longer, healthier, safer, happier and more fulfilling lives, and they have the chance to give their gift of companionship in return. At the Western Pennsylvania Humane Society, pets that are adopted out are given all the initial, age-appropriate vaccinations they require to live safe and healthy lives, although the new owners will need to continue with follow-up care and annual vaccinations to ensure their pets' continued wellbeing.

Unfortunately, due the very high number of homeless, stray, or surrendered pets that are admitted to animal shelters, it is impossible to house and care for every single pet. This means that homeless pets are either turned away, or in the case of open-door shelters, they may be euthanized when shelter capacity limitations are exceeded. The ASPCA estimates that 5 in 10 dogs and 7 in 10 cats in animal shelters must be euthanized simply because there is no one to adopt them. Adopting a pet from an animal shelter gives a home to an animal who would otherwise be turned away or euthanized, and it also creates a space for another homeless pet to come into the shelter and receive treatment, care, and safe housing while it in turn awaits its chance to be adopted into a loving home.

Recently, other local animal shelters are experiencing difficulties with an outbreak of canine influenza, or dog flu, within their facilities and must therefore close their shelters to additional animal intake until the problem is contained and resolved. As a result, WPHS will temporarily be the only remaining open-door shelter in operation locally over the coming weeks and will therefore be facing an average increase

of 40 extra dogs per week above and beyond normal intake rates as these animals are turned away from the other shelters and brought to WPHS instead. Adopting a pet will help to lessen the impact of this situation and free up more space to accommodate as many of these unlucky pets as possible.

Adopting a pet from the Western Pennsylvania Humane Society allows you to take in a new friend at affordable rates over private breeders or pet stores. Both mixed breeds and pure-bred pets are available from WPHS, including dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, and birds. Adopting from WPHS also offers you access to behavioral consultants to ensure a prosperous lifelong relationship between you and your pet. In addition, a \$25 annual membership donation allows your pet to visit the WPHS veterinary clinic without any office fee and also to attend obedience classes at discounted rates. Finally, when you adopt from WPHS, you support community animal initiatives such as humane investigations and education and awareness programs.

If you are thinking of buying a pet or just looking for an animal companion, we strongly encourage you to consider adopting from animal shelters. The Western Pennsylvania Humane Society is deeply committed to the wellbeing of every animal that passes through its doors, and with your support we can help find loving homes for as many of these wonderful pets as possible. Adopting a pet from an animal shelter gives it a chance at life and a safe, loving home. In return you will receive a fun, faithful companion and the satisfaction of knowing you helped save a life. When you open your doors to a new pet, it will open its heart to you and give you many years of friendship and enjoyment.