

GET THE DOGS OUT OF THE DOG HOUSE!



INCREASING SUCCESSFUL CANINE ADOPTION



WHAT'S THE ISSUE WITH GETTING DOGS OUT OF SHELTERS?

In 2004, the estimated number of animals entering a shelter was between **6 and 8 million cats and dogs**¹. According to the ASPCA, an estimated 20% of animals adopted are returned to shelters. The shelter defines a returned pet as an animal that once adopted from a shelter is returned to the same shelter within two years. Most of the animals returned are dogs. The main reason for returning adopted animals are **behavioral issues**. These issues can include: inappropriate elimination, hyperactivity, unwanted chewing, aggressiveness, and separation anxiety².

Shelters have the potential to increase the number of canines adopted and limit the number returned.

Included are tips in how you can retrain and increase positive qualities in dogs to make them more adoptable and limit the number of animals returned.

LET'S TALK ETHICS AND ADAPTABILITY...

Three ethical concerns regarding the welfare of animals:

FEEL WELL

Minimize negative, maximize positive feelings

Provide an environment for shelter dogs that maximizes positive feelings through comfort, familiarity, and positive attention

FUNCTION WELL

Maintain good health

Provide health care needs to shelter dogs including proper diet, water, vaccinations, parasite prevention, and regular health exams to ensure good health status is maintained

LIVE NATURAL LIFE

Allow for expression of natural behaviors

Provide a means for shelter dogs to express their natural behaviors through play, socialization, scent enrichment, and time outdoors



Working to ensure these three concepts are met in shelter dogs can **increase their welfare and allow them to be more adoptable**¹⁰.

If dogs feel well, function well, and live naturally, they are less likely to exhibit abnormal behaviors and be a more likely to exhibit normal behaviors -- making a desirable pet.

IS IT EVER OKAY TO RETURN A PET?

Yes! Looking back to the three concepts of animal welfare, if the concepts aren't met by the new home it can be perfectly acceptable to return a canine to the animal shelter. The main goal of animal shelters is to find animals their forever homes where they can live out their life happily. If the concepts of welfare aren't met, shelters can take the canine back and find a different forever home that addresses our ethical concerns and increases the welfare of the pet.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP YOUR CANINES FIND AND KEEP A FOREVER HOME?



Offer basic/behavior training

The structured nature of training provides a foundation for establishing a semblance of control for the unruly or excitable one⁴



Enrichment such as food toys in the kennels

Can increase activity level and reduce barking



Spay and Neuter dogs

We can decrease aggressive behaviors by decreasing the reproductive hormones such as testosterone⁶



Provide opportunities for socialization

Dogs can exhibit natural behavior with one another

Dogs develop better communication skills and better interacts with people around them



Minimize aversive impact of the shelter

Create a "Living Room" - room designated to resemble a house environment and also gives them a break from the potential negative effects of their kennel

Source of socialization and allows for human-animal interaction



Offer a behavior hotline for adopters

Assist pet owners in resolving basic behavioral problems

Adapted from:

1. Elsie R. Shore (2005) Returning a Recently Adopted Companion Animal: Adopters' Reasons for and Reactions to the Failed Adoption Experience, *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 8:3, 187-198, DOI: 10.1207/s15327604jaws0803_3
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3. Luescher, A. U., & Medlock, R. T. (2009). The effects of training and environmental alterations on adoption success of shelter dogs. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 117(1-2), 63-68. doi:10.1016/j.applanim.2008.11.001
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10. Fraser, D., Weary, D. M., Pajor, E. A., & Milligan, B. N. (1997). A scientific conception of animal welfare that reflects ethical concerns. *Animal welfare*, 6, 187-205.

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