

WHY ARE THESE ANIMALS IN THE SHELTER? IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH THEM? by Cheryl Wicks, Co-Founder Sammie's Friends

All of us who work at the animal shelter love every single animal that comes to us. Don't get me wrong, some of them behave better than others and some are prettier than others. We work with those with behavior problems to improve their behavior. We groom and try to pretty up those that need some spiffing up. We look for just the right person to adopt each and every one of them.

Imagine my surprise the first time someone implied that the animals were in the shelter because they were somehow flawed or had done something wrong. Most of the animals in the shelter have done absolutely nothing to warrant their being in the shelter other than having no one to take care of them. The animal shelter is not a doggie/kitty jail where animals are there because they committed a crime. It is more akin to an orphanage. Animals are placed in the shelter because they have nowhere else to go.

About 80% of the animals that we receive are brought to us by concerned citizens who find the animals alongside the road, at the fair grounds, in their driveway and many other places. Each year we get litters of puppies and kitties that are dumped alongside the road to die or placed in someone's mail box to be found. The disregard that is shown for the animals is shocking and disappointing. All of this could be so easily remedied by getting your animals spayed/neutered. Stop the reproduction of animals that you do not want and can't take care of.

Each year 4 to 5 million animals are euthanized because there is no space for them in the shelter where the animal resides. Or the animal is sick or injured and there are insufficient funds to provide veterinary care. Very few of the animals that get euthanized have actually done something wrong, like attacked someone or killed someone's dog or cat. The average euthanasia rate of municipal shelters in the US is 64%. What a crime. What a shame.

"Please Understand Me" says Kitty

by Cheryl Wicks, Sammie's Friends Animal Shelter

Cats are cats. We are people. We mostly take the world in through sight and sound. Cats experience the world through scent. New born kittens will crawl back to the same nipple on Mama because they recognize the scent. If you pull the kittens off and bathe mama's tummy the kittens become confused.

So much of cat behavior is related to smell and their sense of territory. Their sense of territory can be mama's nipple, other cats, dogs and people in the household, objects and furniture that are in the house they live in.

Cats are territorial, but so are we. We put locks on doors, set up alarms and build fences. We consider this normal human behavior and we do it to have a sense of security. When a cat expresses his territoriality we get upset and think the cat is being spiteful.

The most important thing you must do when you bring a kitty home is help her adjust to her territory. The cat will be stressed because she is moving to a new territory. The cat may express this by hiding. There are things you can do to make the adjustment easier. The smaller the area to begin with the quicker kitty will adjust. Go to a quiet room, put the kennel down with an open door; do not force kitty to come out. If kitty jumps out and hides under the bed; wait for kitty to come to you, do not force. This may take days or in some cases even weeks.

Put a litter box close to where kitty is hiding. Put food and water near by but not too close to the litter. Set up scratching posts and toys. Stay in the room for a bit. You can try sitting on the floor reading a book and leaving some treats near you. Don't take it personally if kitty doesn't leap at the chance to sit in your lap and purr.

If it looks like kitty has come out during the night leave some treats not far from where kitty is hiding. As kitty takes the treats move them further away from kitty's hiding place each day until kitty becomes familiar with the scents of her territory. Some kitties will progress rapidly, others slowly. They are all individuals like we are. Kitties will respond to treats and patience. They will retreat punishment, even more than dogs and people do. They are small in comparison to us and the world doesn't look safe.

I found a stray cat in my neighborhood that I fed outside for six months before I could catch him. It was a long road, but I was richly rewarded. I have been loved and loved people, dogs, horses and cats. I have never been absolutely totally and unconditionally loved and adored by anyone the way Putter loved me. Who wouldn't want that?

I love you Putter!