



ADOPT

DONATE

VOLUNTEER

### **About Us**

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### About Us

### A Message from the Executive Director

I first entered the animal welfare field almost twenty ago. When I look back I realize that I have learned many things over the years and have evolved and changed certain opinions and feelings. I also realize that many of my core beliefs remain the same, I started working in an animal shelter after leaving a career in human services, People would ask me all the time "Were you tired of working with people?" I say the same thing today that I said then. "No, I love working with people but working in an animal shelter gives me the opportunity to work with both people and animals."



"If we start from a perspective that people are coming to us with the best intentions, we will have a much better success rate of finding life-long matches."

-Carmine DiCenso, ED, Providence Animal Rescue League



The negativity bias refers to the notion that, even when of equal intens Negativity bias unpleasant thoughts, e events) hav aumatic ate and processes to negative experiences more bther words, som than neutral or positive s of an equally emotion a experiences, which can hething s been investigated impact our decision making the formation o and assessment of risk. ention, learning, and memory, and decision making considerations. -Wikipedia

Cause for surrender/intake	Effect on adoption policies	
Too many	Require s/n for pets at home	
Stray	Adopt indoor-only cats/dogs to homes with fenced yards	
Landlord issues	Verify all renters have permission to own pets prior to adoption	
Cost	Check with veterinarian to make sure all current pets are up to date	

## **Adoption Forum I 1999**

## **Adoption Forum II 2003**

and families

"The widely Illusion of control has led man reconsider to A belief that we control processes to uncontrollable events. It is open and give stronger when there is an emotional need to control the outcome.

**introl** was a roughout the ruth is we trol the doption re the pet is rochipped ed."

# **Growing Body of Research**

Animals 2013 3 995-1001 doi:10 3390/ani3040995



Communication

#### Should Dogs and Cats be Given as Gifts?

Emily Weiss 1.4, Emily D. Dolan 2, Laurie Garrison 3, Julie Hong 4 and Margaret Slater 5

- Shelter Research and Cruelty to Animals (
- Shelter Research and Cruelty to Animals ( E-Mail: emily.dolan( 3 Shelter Research and
- Cruelty to Animals (A E-Mail: laurie.garriso Research and Analyt to Animals (ASPCA
- E-Mail: julie.hong@a

  5 Shelter Research and
  Cruelty to Animals (A
- E-Mail: margaret.slat

  \* Author to whom corr

Tel.: +1-917-574-753

Received: 12 September Published: 16 October 2

> Simple Summary animal welfare o adopters who integoal of increasing receiving a dog love/attachment, of there is no increase

Abstract: Policie animal welfare o adopters who inte This article was downloaded by: [Dr Kenneth Shapiro] On: 21 August 2012, At: 12:30 Publisher: Routledge

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### Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science

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### A Comparison of Attachment Levels of Adopters of Cats: Fee-Based Adoptions Versus Free Adoptions

Emily Weiss <sup>a</sup> & Shannon Gramann <sup>b</sup>

- \* ASPCA® Shelter Research and Development, Benton, Kansas
- b ASPCA® Shelter Research and Development, Hale Corners, Wisconsin

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Animals 2012, 2, 144-159; doi:10.3390/ani2020144



Article

Why Did You Choose This Pet?: Adopters and Pet Selection Preferences in Five Animal Shelters in the United States

#### Emily Weiss 1,4, Katherine Miller 2, Heather Mo

- Shelter Research and Development, Community Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA®), 424 E, 92nd St.
- Applied Science and Research, Community Out Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA®), 424 E. 92 nd St., E-Mail: katherine.miller@aspea.org
- <sup>3</sup> Applied Research and Behavior, Community Ou Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA®), 424 E. 92nd St., E-Mail: heather.mohan-gibbons@aspca.org
- Hunter College, City University of New York, 6
   E-Mail: ci\_vela@yahoo.com
- Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.: +1-316-778-1273.

Received: 24 February 2012; in revised form: 26 M Published: 10 April 2012

> Simple Summary: This study examined reas shelter, what behaviors were first exhibited by important during their selection process, and behavior in various contexts.

> Abstract: Responses from an adopter surselection, type of information received by animal's behavior was observed. Appearance and personality were the top reasons for an adopters stated that information about the a more important than information on cage ca particularly important. Adopters found great rather than viewing it in its kennel. The res create better adoption matches, prioritize

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16 Koret Shelter Medio Top Study': Disease Trai Shelter Adoption Ward.": Page 76

Confirmation bias also called myside bias is the tendency to search for, interpret, favo Confirmation bias e's beliefs or hypotheses.[N error of inductive reas Tendency to consider remember information se information that confirms our . The effect is stronger for e ed beliefs. People also te beliefs, even in the face of their existing hvoked to position. Biase evidence to the contrary. The explain attitud re extreme even though t effect is also stronger for nce), <u>belief</u> shown to be perseverance false), the irra emotionally charged issues. ation encountered early in a series) and <u>illusory correlation</u> (when people falsely perceive an association between two events or situations). -Wikipedia

Cats and dogs living in American homes (in millions)



Cats and dogs taken in by U.S. shelters annually





6-8 Million

# fewer than 6% of pets overall entering shelters each year.

Estimated number of cats and dogs in American homes –AVMA 2012 Estimated number of animals entering shelters in America each year - HSUS 2014



The majority of pets are doing ok!

# The overwhelming majority: loved and safe

Halloween, Christmas, and Easter are over	You go home and think about it for a day	We "approve" you
We inspect your home	You bring in your pets for a meeting	You bring in all members of your household
You get your current pets spayed or neutered	You install a fence	Your children grow up
You fill out an application	We call your vet	We see proof of home ownership

# ~ 39% of owned pets from shelters & rescues



# Top 5 Alternative Sources:

- Friends or relatives
- Stray (cats)
- Breeder (dogs)
- Private party
- Bred at home from own pet

APPA 2013/2014 National Pet Owners Survey

### **Barriers have Risks**

- Longer stays risk quality of life.
- Resources divert from other pets in your community that need you.
- Pets & people are cut off from safety nets.
- Less humane options are fueled as support gets limited.
- Euthanasia risk increases... even if not directly experienced.





# The overwhelming majority: loved and safe

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# Proactive Approach to Adoption

- Let the "Positives" in
- Attract & welcome adopters
- Reward their choice
- Set them up for success
- Support them if they need it

# **Four Steps**

Implement policies that remove barriers and increase options

2

Rely on conversations instead of applications

3

**Develop marketing that overcomes barriers** 

4

**Train your team** 



# Adopters Welcome — DIY —

First there was Adopters Welcome, the manual and webinar series to help find, engage and support more adopters. Now, putting Adopters Welcome into practice is easier than ever with our Do It Yourself (DIY) action plan.

Check out our new resources to jump-start an Adopters Welcome program at your shelter or rescue.

animalsheltering.org/adopterswelcomedly





# Implement policies that remove barriers and increase options for homeless pets in your community

Automatic No's

Extra requirements

Built-in delays

# **Traditional Adoption Policies...**

So You Think You Can Just Adopt a Dog?

The New york Times

Has Adopting Pets Become Too Difficult?



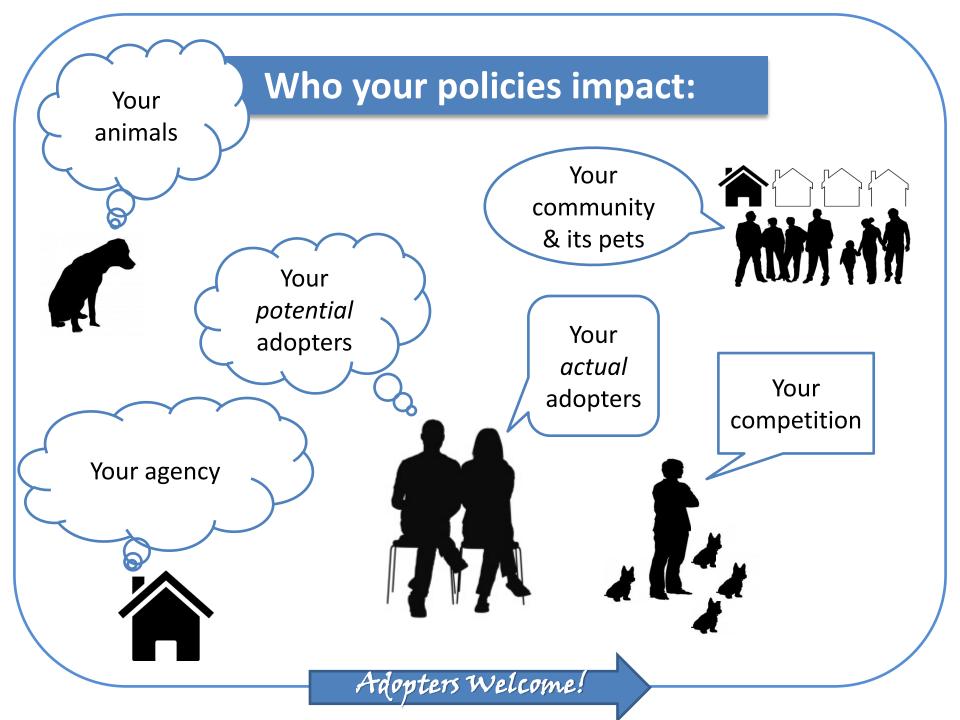
# No Pet For You

Want to adopt a dog or cat? Prepare for an inquisition at the animal rescue.



Are Shelters Too Picky With Potential Adopters?





# If policy is "Landlord approval required..."



How was it? I'm looking for a dog. . .



We need more time, space, and \$! And a home for Frida!

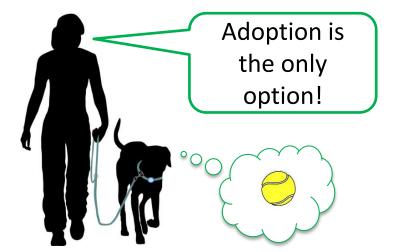


Well, we tried to adopt!

Hell yes I have puppies!



### If policy is "Support renters instead of policing them..."



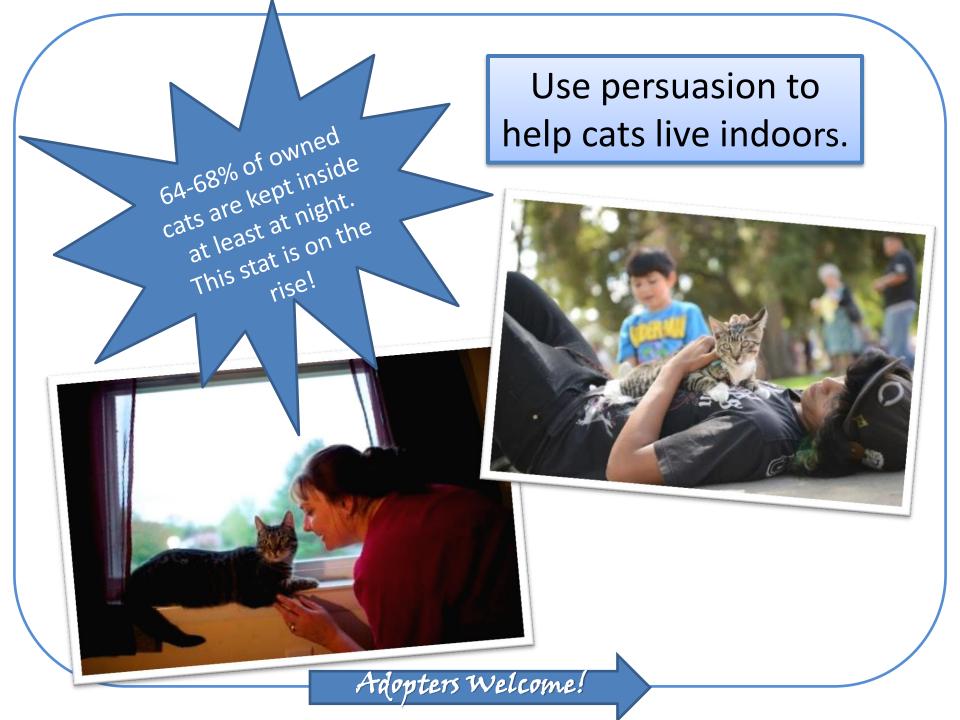


Now we can help Digger!



Maybe I should go back to school...



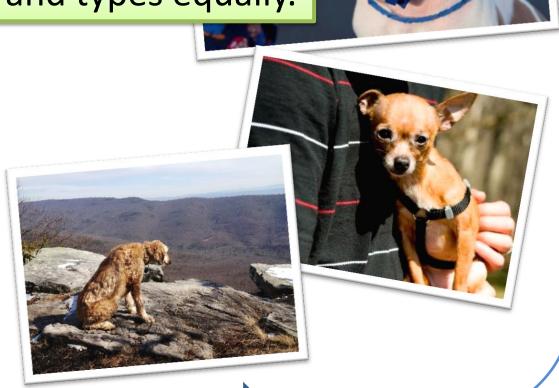


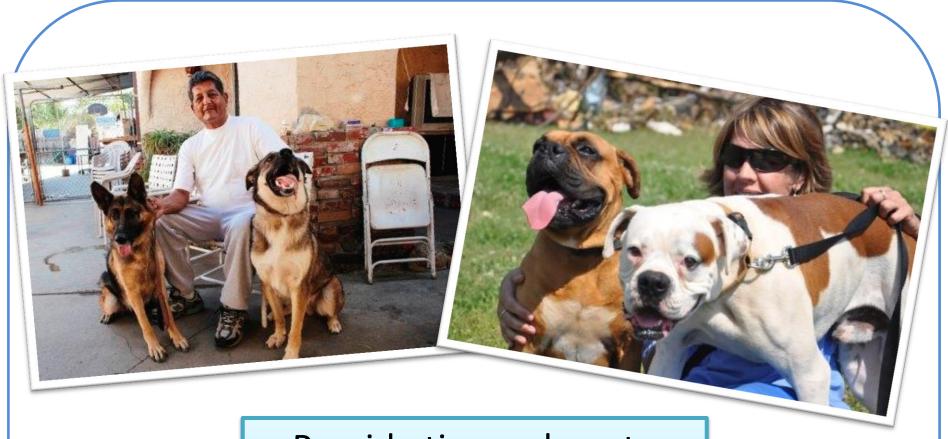
"I agree to restrain the dog either by leash or fence when it is outdoors." - a Sighthound rescue



Treat all dog breeds and types equally.

"Do you have a completely fenced-in yard, or is there any part of your yard that is completely fenced in?"
-a different Sighthound rescue





Provide tips on how to intro new pets, don't require "meet-n-greet" unless adopter requests it.



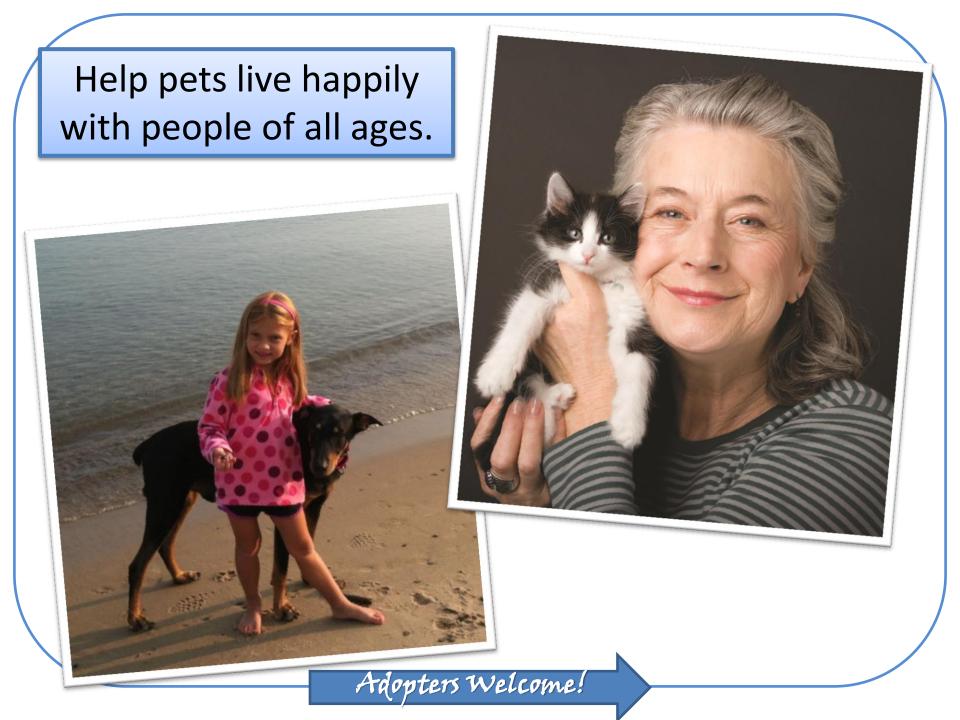
Support homes longterm instead of investigating them once.



Help adopters keep their dogs happy and healthy whether or not they have a fence.







	Is this our policy?		
Agencies with Adopters Welcome programs:		Yes, but	No
Do not require home checks.			
Do not require references, including vet references, and don't perform reference checks.			
Do not require meet-and-greets with pets already in the home.			
Do not require landlord checks or proof that renters are allowed pets.			
Do not require every member of the family to meet the animal before adoption.			
Do not automatically deny adopters considering declawing their cat, or who have had other cats declawed.			
Do not automatically deny adopters considering allowing their cat to go outdoors, or who have allowed other cats to go outdoors.			
Do not automatically deny people whose pets have had spotty or no vet history.			
Do not use different adoption criteria for different breed/types of dog.			
Do not automatically deny adopters because they have relinquished or rehomed past pets.			
Do not deny adopters because a prior pet was hit by a car, lost or stolen.			
Do not automatically deny adopters considering an "outdoor" dog or who have kept other dogs outdoors.			
Do not deny adopters because they have allowed past pets to breed or because a current pet is not spayed/neutered.			
Do not mandate that adopters have fenced-in yards.			
Do not deny adopters because they are "too old" or "too young" (unless they are legally prohibited from signing a contract under state law), have disabilities, etc.			
Do not deny adopters because they are unemployed, underemployed, work too many hours, etc.			
Do not deny adoptions based on the adopter's living situation or status (e.g., student, military, assisted living, renter, etc.).			
Do not discriminate (consciously or unconsciously) against any adopter based on race, color, class, occupation, gender, orientation, etc.			
Do ensure that animals can go home the same day they are adopted whenever possible.			
Do allow pets to be adopted as gifts.			
Do provide a no-fault return policy which allows adopters who return pets to			
adopt another pet or receive a refund of their adoption fee.  Do allow adopters the option to rehome pets on their own if they can't keep the			
pets.  Do ensure their adoption contract reflects the Adopters Welcome philosophy and contains no unnecessary language like "pets must be returned to us" clauses.			

Adopters
Welcome
Adoption
Policy
Review
Worksheet

# **Put Your Adoption Policies to the AW Test!**

- ID the policy
- ID its intention
- Does it reach or undermine its goal?
- Can you achieve that same goal without that policy?
- Replace or rewrite as needed



# **Return policy**

"It's a hassle free program with more rewards than pitfalls.... It's a program that helps us attract new adopters and helps us build trust & loyalty with existing adopters."

-Tamra Wagenknecht Director of Shelter Services The Anti-Cruelty Society



# Our Adoptions are Satisfaction Guaranteed.

While there is a person for every animal, we know that not every animal is for every person. If you adopt an animal from The Anti-Cruelty Society and discover that you are not compatible, you may return your pet, satisfaction guaranteed.



# **Rehoming policy**

Family & friends = <u>ready-made</u> adopter pool!



# Be a resource for adopters (& owners)

Adopter's challenge: housetraining new puppy/dog

Helpful options Where to find Approximate Additional notes

Page 38

Tips on housetrain Crates

Adopter's challenge: Keeping a new cat indoors

Baby gates
Enzymatic cleaners

Helpful options	Where to find	Approximate cost	Additional notes
Tips on indoor enrichment	indoorpet.osu.edu/cats/	Free	Look under the "For Pet Owners" tab
Toys cats like to hunt	Local shelter's retail store All local pet supply stores Online	\$7+	Some favorites are: Treat-dispensing toys Fishing rod toys Interactive toys
Cat harness	Local shelter's retail store All local pet supply stores Online	\$10+	
Making cat- friendly changes to your home	Catification by Jackson Galaxy	\$13+	Includes ideas that range from cheap DIY to professional remodeling

# Before you say no...

"I tried to adopt a kitten that was found alongside the road. By page 3 of the application I walked away in disgust."
-comments, Dogington Post article



Has Adopting Pets Become Too Difficult?

### No Pet For You

Want to adopt a dog or cat? Prepare for an inquisition at the animal rescue.



Rely on conversations instead of applications



# Complete this application



avopt a shelter pet.

Adopters Welcome!

#### animalsheltering.org/questionnaire

#### **NO.** . .

- No application language
- No request for landlord info
- No request for vet history or contacts
- No questions about gift adoptions
- No automatic no's
- No delays

#### YES!

- We support gift adoptions. . .
- We support renters. . .
- Tells us about your household
- Tell us about your pets
- What do you want <u>us</u> to know
- Medical & behavior info
- Questions?
- Services & opportunities



## Develop marketing that overcomes barriers

Fears about "unwanted animals"

Reputation for a difficult adoption process

Internal barriers

Blind spots

Adopters Welcome!



#### Fee waived cat adoptions???



#### FREE with benefits...

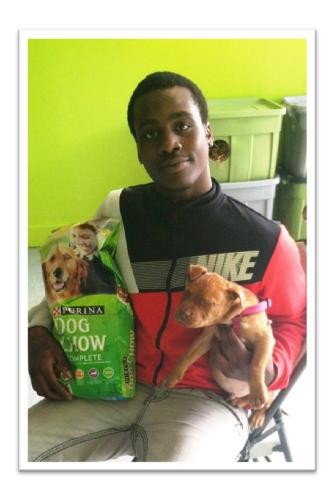
- Attention grabbing!
- Promotes adoption for all animals
- Cats still have all the services you offer (unlike other free cats!)

#### **SURVEYS** say. . .

- No impact on commitment or care
- Loss of adoption fees balanced by
  - Reduced length of stay
  - Increased donations
  - Product sales

#### **Check your blind spots**

- Don't take it for granted that everyone knows about you!
- According to nationwide survey,
   40% of pets come from shelters
   & rescues
- Only 3% of pets from shelters or rescues in neighborhoods served by Pets for Life
- Map past adopters to discover who you've been missing
- Find opportunities for adoption and more



Step 4

#### **Train your team**

"Practice isn't the thing you do once you're good."

It's the thing you do that <u>makes</u> you good."

#### We'll explain this new pet's medical history and behavioral history. Check additional topics you'd like to discuss:

- ☐ Feeding this pet
- ☐ House-training/litter box

training

- ☐ Grooming/nail trimming
- □ Exercise, toys and fun activities
- □ Puppy/kitten-proofing

your home

Other questions:

☐ Finding a trainer

□ Introducing this pet to

other pets

☐ Microchips and other ID

options

☐ Finding a veterinarian

□ Declawing

☐ Crate-training

□ Moving with pets

□ Pulling on-leash





Your team needs a positive, engaging communication toolbox!

- Open-ended questions
- Active listening & paraphrasing
- Positive tones
- Social connectors & conversation continuers



## Adoption success has a positive ripple effect on animal welfare



- Help more animals
- Spread positive PR
- Draw in new adopters
- Promote adoption over other options
- Increased support
- Happy staff and volunteers
- Do even more for animals



### Please Share!



AdoptersWelcome@humanesociety.org

sdalonzo@humanesociety.org

Adopters Welcome!