

Activity Sheet 4: Grades 5-8

Animal Shelters: Myth or Fact?

There are many misunderstandings about animal shelters and the work they do. Learn how to separate the facts from the myths.

MYTH: Spaying or neutering your pet will make her fat and lazy.

FACT: Spaying or neutering will not make an animal fat or lazy. Animals gain weight for the same reasons people do—eating too much food and not getting enough exercise. Pet overpopulation is an important reason why animals end up in shelters. The operation is safe, painless and helps prevent unwanted animals from being put down because there are not enough homes willing to adopt them.

MYTH: Shelter animals are “bad” pets. Why else would their owners give them up?

FACT: Animals are brought to shelters for many reasons. If pets are not spayed or neutered to prevent them from having babies, an owner may end up with too many animals and not be able to find them a good home. Some people move to a new apartment or city and can't take their pets with them. Pets are most commonly given up for behavior problems such as scratching the furniture or not being house trained. The good news is that you can correct many bad behaviors by training your pet and not have to give him up.

MYTH: Animals in shelters are sick and unhealthy.

FACT: Most of the animals up for adoption are healthy. They just need good homes. After an animal enters a shelter, he is given a checkup to make sure he is not sick. He may be given vaccinations to prevent certain diseases. Shelter workers and volunteers may spend time socializing him before he is adopted. This helps prepare the pet for life in a family's home.

MYTH: Shelters only have mix breeds or “mutts” available for adoption.

FACT: Twenty to thirty percent of the animals in shelters are purebred dogs and cats. That being said, it is not important whether a pet is purebred or mixed. What makes a good pet is how he reacts to you and how you are with your pet.

MYTH: Animals taken to shelters are killed.

FACT: Animal shelters do everything they can to find homes for the animals in their care, but there are not enough homes willing to adopt all the animals that are brought to shelters. Euthanasia or putting an animal down is sometimes necessary and more humane than turning animals loose on the streets. Animals that live on the streets often suffer from disease, injury or starvation.

MYTH: People who work in animal shelters don't care about animals.

FACT: Shelter workers and volunteers truly care about animals. They often work long hours and try to give the animals the best care possible. Many people who work in animal shelters could make more money doing other jobs, but instead choose to dedicate their lives to helping animals.

MYTH: You should adopt a kitten or puppy.

FACT: Before adopting a pet—young or old—it is important to consider how much time you and your family have to give to a pet. Adopting a pet is a big responsibility. Like when you were younger, kittens and puppies need lots of attention and training. It may make more sense to adopt an older pet. Pets two years of age or older are usually easier to care for and are often already house trained.