

Adoption strategies

- How many of you conduct adoptions?
- How many of you have problems in this area?

Discussion: Problems in getting animals adopted

- The community of street cats is quickly expanding, but the living conditions and the adoption rate keep deteriorating
- Adoption rate is low because of a lack of human resources
- We have over 100 dogs, but the adoption rate is 3-4/month
- Our biggest challenge is the low success rate for adoption, and we are trying our best to find new channels
- The number of dogs our shelter can contain has been exceeded. We need to publicise more to attract people to adopt dogs from our shelter to balance the intake.
- The number of animals who need adopting is too large.
- The process of adoption is slow.

How can we get animals into good homes?

- Our main aim with adoption should be to find good homes for animals – NOT just to get more animals out of the shelter
- We want these homes to be permanent
- We want these animals to be loved and cared for

Tackling the issue

- Before the animal enters your care
- While in your care – shelter/foster
- After adoption

Methods for improving adoption rates

- Education
- Access
- Presentation
- Marketing/PR

Messages

- The responsibilities as well as the benefits of having a pet
- Why people should adopt instead of buying. E.g.
 - They will be saving a life
 - They will be saving money
 - They will reduce the demand for commercial breeders
 - If they adopt an older animal, they can avoid training problem
- How to care for their animal

Education

- Counselling at shelter during adoption procedure
- Leaflets at shelter and other places such as vet clinics, malls, offices
- Presentations in schools and colleges

Access

- Can potential adopters reach your shelter easily?
- Do they know where it is?
- Are you open after office hours? On weekends?
- Do you have a phone number that the public know about?
- Is there someone always available to answer queries?

Presentation

- Do you have a separate area for animals to be adopted?
- Does it look attractive?
- Do the animals look comfortable in it?
- You are competing with brightly coloured, well lit pet shops – if the shelter looks depressing, people will avoid it

Presentation

- Put up some information (not too much) about the animal next to it. E.g. age, a cute name, is the animal good with children, something interesting about them
- Don't show people puppies and kittens first – give older animals a chance
- Put bright bandanas on darker coloured animals
- Put different coloured animals together
- Explain to potential adopters why dogs will bark when they see new people

Presentation

- Design the adoption areas to group around courtyards or porches to enable play and socialisation and also allow get-acquainted areas for adopters
- All adoption areas should be spacious and filled with natural light.
- You can separate the dog areas and cat areas to limit stress and to allow those adopters to focus on their favourites







Shelter environment

- A shelter is a frustrating environment for any animal
- Negative behavioural changes are likely in long term animals – leading to decreased adoption
- An understanding of animal behaviour can help you make changes to make the environment less daunting

Making the shelter experience more positive

- Daily walk on a leash
- Daily off-leash play in a fenced area.
- Daily in-kennel socialisation including brushing, petting, and just being around the animal.
- Daily dog-dog play outside the kennel.
- Rudimentary behaviour training
- Use a foster home to give them a break

*Neuter all your animals
before you send them to
new homes!*

Should you charge an adoption fee?

- Having a pet needs a committed owner – and charging makes them value it more
- A ‘free’ pet may be considered ‘disposable’
- Once the costs of the rescue and shelter are explained (vaccines, medicine, food, etc.) most people should be happy to pay
- Reduces the risk that animals will be resold to labs or meat/fur dealers
- If they can’t afford the fee, how will they pay for the expense of keeping animal over the long term?
- Charge a standard fee – do not charge more for pedigreed animals

Screening potential adopters

- Set up a procedure to screen adopters
- Talk to them about their expectations – and ensure that you consider the animal's needs
- Find out about their past experiences with animals
- Try and get a match – e.g. don't give an over-energetic dog to someone who cannot control it

Screening potential adopters: going too far

- Adoption criteria should be used as guidelines
- Every case is individual – do not reject someone because they do not fit the perfect profile
- What is most important is the quality and amount of time and care that the adopter is going to give the animal

Post-adoption

- Home visits (pre-adoption as well, if possible)
- Phone support for new adopters - many of the problems that they encounter are minor and can be solved with your help
- Post success stories on your website – with pictures of the animals in their new homes

Marketing/PR

We have to learn how to be better than puppy mills, better than pet shops, better than anybody else when it comes to getting these animals into good homes.

- *Mike Arms, US shelter and adoption group advisor*

Be creative

http://www.petatv.com/tvpopup/Prefs.asp?video=abc_buy_one_kill_one_psa&chgpref=

Marketing/PR

- Postcards/Billboards/Posters/Advertisements/Fliers
- Adoptathons (marathon adoption sessions)
- Websites
- Mobile adoption centres – such as malls
- Enlist professional creative people - ask ad agencies/PR firms if they will do pro bono work for your organisation



Indian Pariah Dog Club

Problems: Promoting one type of animal over another

- Animals can be seen as temporary status symbols
- More animals will be abandoned in the long term and will end up in the shelter once they are no longer in fashion
- Sends out the signal that one type of animal has more value than another – a strange position for an animal protection organisation!
- Encourages breeding – nobody should be breeding animals when there are so many in need of homes
- Encourages puppy mills
- Reduction in adoptions of other animals
- Animal protection organisations should NEVER be involved in the business of breeding more animals - it goes against everything you are working for

RSPCA UK

- Every year the UK's RSPCA re-homes around 100,000 animals
- Usually, an interview is carried out first
 - Divides the serious from the not-so-serious potential owner and gives the new owners the opportunity to think about what they are taking on
 - No impulsive decisions and the RSPCA is certain the animal is going to the right home.
 - In addition, a home visit may be required for certain animals and is often followed up with a post-adoption visit.
- Dogs and cats are neutered - as well as microchipped and vaccinated - before they are re-homed.

Share what works

- Communicate with potential adopters
- The rescuer and the adopters share the expense
- Volunteers help with some of the adoption work
- We have communicated with the Animal Hygiene Inspection Centre about sheltering and adoption – this is ongoing
- We vaccinate and neuter animals waiting to be adopted
- We have selection criteria for potential adopters
- We encourage the rescuer to try and get the animals adopted themselves. We help them with resources and knowledge about animal care so that they can place the animals in good homes
- We have built a good relationship with local media, and they often report on animal rescues and adoptions in local newspapers and on TV
- We promote neutering to everyone who wants to adopt an animal from our shelter, even if the animals are pedigreed and expensive

More ideas

- Both males and females are sterilised and only after that do we allow adoption
- We surveyed people in two 2 big shopping malls and recruited adopters
- We publicise adoptions on the web and ask friends in the media for help
- Our website serves as a platform for potential adopters and gives advice on medical care for sick animals
- We had a cat photo exhibition to help people understand and appreciate cats so that adoption would be increased
- We had an adoption event in the local park