

Wanted: A committed & loving home

Star Press - Muncie, Ind.

Subjects: Animal care; Animal shelters; Immunization; Welfare; Animal control; Spaying & neutering

Author: Carlson, John

Date: Aug 20, 2004

Start Page: D.1

Section: Lifestyle

Document Text

Animal welfare groups join to find perfect homes for pets

By JOHN CARLSON

jcarlson(at)thestarpress.com

MUNCIE -- A fair to be held here should bring out plenty of carnival barkers.

Meowers, too.

It's the Pet Adoption Fair, set for 1-6 p.m. Saturday at the Delaware County Fairgrounds. Its goal is to help place some animals in loving homes.

But there's a bigger goal, too.

"What we want to focus on is spaying and neutering to put an end to pet overpopulation," said Jill Dolon of the Unconditional Love Foundation.

Jodi Littler, an animal activist and Petsmart employee, said the pet overpopulation problem is downright shocking.

"It's everything. It's mixed breeds, it's pure breeds. It's so bad, it's unbelievable," she said, citing that as the reason she chose not to breed her golden retrievers. "I'm not going to worry about where my puppies end up. A lot of puppies get put to sleep."

No less shocking to her is the way some pets are given up.

"I don't know how people can keep a dog for seven years and say, 'Oops, I've gotta get rid of 'im!'" she said.

Some 30 organizations -- including several shelters and a number of animal rescue groups -- are expected to have representatives at the fair.

Joining forces

Among the breed-specific organizations taking part will be Great Dane Rescue Inc., Indy Home for Huskies, USA Dog Defenders of Greyhounds, Saint Bernard Rescue, Donna's Chihuahua Rescue and Adopt a Lab Indiana.

"Pretty much every organization that shows up is going to have animals there," said Dolon, who works in animal control in Delaware County.

That doesn't mean, however, that you can count on taking a new pet home from the fair.

"These organizations want to make sure they are placing the right dog in the right home," Dolon said.

The primary concern is the animals' welfare.

"We want what we call their 'forever home,'" said Cathy Overmyer, a Hillcroft Services employee and an official of Sheltie Rescue of Central Indiana, which has taken in and placed more than 480 shelties since 1994. "No one will be taking the dog home that day."

The sheltie, Overmyer noted, is small and beautiful, but potential owners also need to know they can be noisy, shed and require grooming.

"They want to be with their people," she added. "They're not an outside dog."

Sheltie Rescue's adoption fees are \$200 for an animal under 18 months, and \$150 for one that's older. Even then, the fee often falls short of funds spent by the group on veterinary care.

'We get more and more that are heartworm positive," Overmyer said.

Whatever circumstances account for the homeless pets, all involved hope the fair leads to a solution.

'No matter where you go, pet overpopulation is a problem," said Dolon, who began doing dog rescue work while living in Los Angeles. 'It's a shame that animals have to be put to sleep because they don't have a home."

Education is key

Those attending the fair will see pet-rescue and pet-care videos, learn about spay-and-neuter assistance programs and have an opportunity to obtain locator microchips for their pets.

The chips, placed under an animal's skin like a vaccination, will be free. Mandatory registration with Companion Animal Recovery is \$9.

Veterinarian Teresa Calvert of Westview Animal Clinic will perform the procedures, assisted by Kate Dwenger.

'This is a permanent form of identification," Dwenger said. 'Animals can't lose it like they can a collar or a tag. It's also proof of ownership."

Fair attendees will also get the chance to voice their opinions about animal control issues in Delaware County.

'Education is a key to the whole issue," Dolon said.

The fair is also an opportunity for diverse animal welfare groups to unite.

'Showing that rescue groups can work together will be great," she said. 'Everybody has the same goal, but we have different ways to get there."

In Thursday's Star Press, a letter to the editor raised concerns about holding the fair the same week that Ball State University students return for fall semester. Students abandoning pets at the end of a school year has been a problem here.

Dolon noted the timing of Saturday's fair was coordinated with a larger event -- National Homeless Animal Day -- and urged that anyone who comes to adopt an animal be committed to a lifetime relationship.

'We think if you can't care for a pet for its whole life, you shouldn't adopt one," she said.

Instead, she urged animal-loving students to volunteer as pet fosterers or to work with rescue groups.

'You wouldn't abandon your kids," she said. 'Please don't abandon your pets."

With that understanding, however, she hopes many people will attend to learn how to help animals and maybe even enjoy some Sno-cones or ice cream.

For Overmyer, meanwhile, her three shelties are snacks of another sort.

'Shelties are like potato chips," she said with a laugh. 'You can't have just one."

Contact John Carlson at 213-5824.

Consider these facts:

- 'In six years, one female dog and her offspring can be the source of 67,000 puppies."

- 'In just seven years, one female cat and her young can produce 420,000 kittens."

- 'Every day in the United States, tens of thousands of puppies and kittens are born. Compare this to the 11,000 human births each day, and you can see that there can never be enough homes for all these pets."

Source: Unconditional Love Foundation

What do 'spay" and 'neuter" really mean?

'Your veterinarian can fully explain spay and neuter procedures to you and discuss with you the best age at which to sterilize your pet. Basically, female dogs and cats are 'spayed' by removing their reproductive organs, and male dogs and cats are 'neutered' by removing both testicles. In both cases, an operation is performed while the animal is under anesthesia.

'Sometimes the pet can go home the same day, and other times a stay at your veterinarian is required. Depending upon the procedure, your pet may need stitches removed after a few days.'

Source: Unconditional Love Foundation

Prevent a litter -- it's good for your pet

- 'Spaying and neutering helps dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives.'

- 'Spaying and neutering can eliminate or reduce the incidence of health problems that can be difficult or expensive to treat.'

- 'Spaying eliminates the possibility of uterine or ovarian cancer and greatly reduces the incidence of breast cancer, particularly when your pet is spayed before her first estrous cycle.'

- 'Neutering eliminates testicular cancer and decreases the incidence of prostate disease.'

Source: Unconditional Love Foundation

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

Abstract (Document Summary)

Some 30 organizations -- including several shelters and a number of animal rescue groups -- are expected to have representatives at the fair. Joining forces Among the breed-specific organizations taking part will be Great Dane Rescue Inc., Indy Home for Huskies, USA Dog Defenders of Greyhounds, Saint Bernard Rescue, Donna's Chihuahua Rescue and Adopt a Lab Indiana.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.