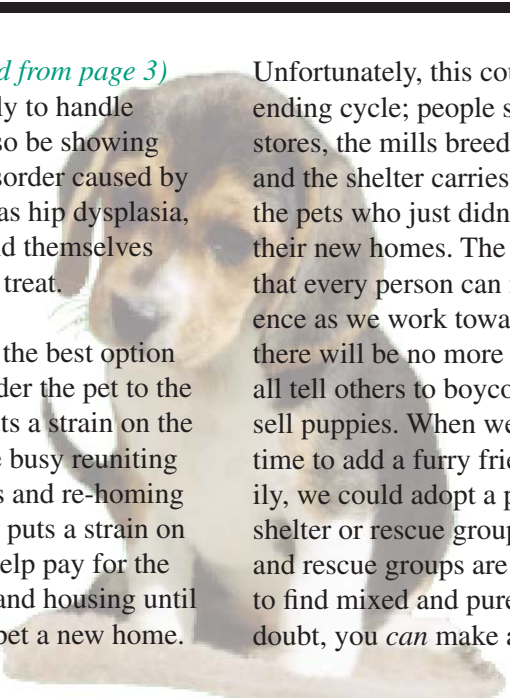


Puppy *(continued from page 3)*

difficult for the family to handle him. The pet may also be showing signs of a genetic disorder caused by poor breeding, such as hip dysplasia, which the owners find themselves financially unable to treat.

The family may feel the best option for them is to surrender the pet to the local shelter. This puts a strain on the shelter staff, who are busy reuniting owners with lost pets and re-homing stray animals. It also puts a strain on the taxpayers, who help pay for the pets veterinary care and housing until the shelter finds the pet a new home.

Unfortunately, this could be a never-ending cycle; people support the pet stores, the mills breed more puppies, and the shelter carries the burden of the pets who just didn't work out in their new homes. The good news is that every person can make a difference as we work towards a day when there will be no more mills. We can all tell others to boycott stores that sell puppies. When we decide it is time to add a furry friend to the family, we could adopt a pet through a shelter or rescue group. Both shelters and rescue groups are great places to find mixed and purebred dogs. No doubt, you *can* make a difference! ▲



We're on TV and Radio!

Radio: Q98.5 on Wednesdays around 8:40 a.m.

TV: WIFR-23 on Mondays on the Morning Blend show around 9:20 a.m.

TV: WREX-13 on Wednesdays on the News at Noon following the Mr. Food around 12:15p.m.

TV: WTVO-17 on Thursdays on Day-break News around 6:45 a.m.

Find out who our *Pet of the Week* is!

Photos with Santa!

Help us raise funds for homeless animals by bringing your pet(s) to Petsmart this December and get a photo taken with Santa from 11-4!

Dec. 7 & 14 - Petsmart on 173

Dec. 13 & 14 - Petsmart on E. State St.

DONATION FORM & ACTIVITIES EMAIL LIST

YES!! I want to make a donation to the Winnebago County Animal Services Auxiliary; an all volunteer group that supports the homeless animals cared for at the shelter. Auxiliary funds may be used for outreach and public education programs, to provide medical care for injured adoptable pets, for food and supplies, microchip clinics, funds for our spay/neuter clinic and to fund special projects such as outdoor kennels and exercise pens.

I'm enclosing: \$15 \$30 \$50 \$100 Other _____

This gift is a: memorial or tribute in honor of a person or a pet

Memorial or tribute information _____

Your Name _____ Email _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

I would also like more information about volunteering and other ways to help homeless pets.

Please make checks payable to WCAS Auxiliary
Return to: WCAS Auxiliary, 4517 N. Main St., Rockford, IL 61103

If you have friends or family who care about animals and might like to know more about the lifesaving work being done at Winnebago County Animal Services, please provide their email addresses and we'd be happy to email them our newsletter and keep them updated on our current events, activities and fundraisers! Thank you!

Name _____ Name _____

Email _____ Email _____

You can also go to our webpage at www.wcasrock.org and download a volunteer application along with the many different volunteer opportunities available.

If you would like to receive *Pawsitive News* and details of current events, activities and fundraisers on a regular basis by email, please send an email to news@wcasrock.org asking to be on our **Activities Email List**. If you have friends and/or family who also care about animals and would like to know more about the lifesaving work being done at Winnebago County Animal Services, please include their email addresses also! Thank you!

Pawsitive News

from the Winnebago County Animal Services Auxiliary

4517 N. MAIN • ROCKFORD, IL 61103 • 815-319-4100 • WWW.WCASROCK.ORG

FALL/WINTER 2008-2009 • VOLUME 2 NO. 1

The 'Disposable Pet' Syndrome

For many, visiting a shelter can be an overwhelming emotional experience. I've seen people stand and cry looking into those big eyes staring at them from behind bars. A question I get asked over and over is 'How did he get here?' After all, no jury ever handed down a sentence.

Even though we claim to be a nation of animal lovers, pets are quickly becoming victims of our fast-paced, disposable mentality. So, how DID they get here? More often that not, it is a case of the "disposable pet" syndrome. "It just didn't work out." "He barks too much." "We're moving." "We just don't have time for him anymore." "We're tired of cleaning up after him." "The kids promised to take care of him and they don't." "My child has allergies." "He goes outside of his litter box." These are all reasons we consistently hear on a daily basis at the shelter. Yet on

the other hand, we've seen people keep their pets through thick and thin, through unbelievably difficult and challenging circumstances ... because their pet was part of the family and they would no sooner "get rid" of them than any other member of the family.

When I was 6 years old, my parents went out looking for a new family dog after their black Labrador Prince died at 15 of old age. They found the cutest puppy, a pretty brown and white spaniel/collie cross in a pet shop. Timmy had a lot of issues. He was not just an escape artist, he was THE escape artist. He loved to chase cars and bicycles and steal things from people's doorsteps. One time he ate a 1lb. bar of chocolate from someone's Christmas parcel. How on earth he didn't die from that, I will never know!

A medium sized dog, Timmy, could jump a 6-foot fence Marine combat-style in seconds. He was extremely dog aggressive and would fight at the least provocation. Had they had him neutered, I am sure he would have been a much easier dog, however back then my parents and many others thought that neutering was just 'not natural'.

My parents would no more have given up on Timmy than they would have their 60-year marriage. They accepted him just as he was, committed to giving him a home until the day he died and they did.

This story exemplifies true commitment. Yes they had challenges, and some serious, but they loved their dog and worked through them. Timmy was truly a part of the family - not to be given up on at any cost. (Of course had he been to obedience training, they probably would have avoided most, if not all, of those problems.)

(continued on next page)

Get Your T-Shirt & Help Spread the Word!

Looking for a really cute T-shirt with a really great message? Then look no further! The volunteer auxiliary is selling T-shirts with the message *Adopt a Shelter Pet*. The original artwork was drawn by local artist Bruce Lewis, better known as 'Mr. Mustache.' The shirts are available in blue or natural, in adult sizes S - XL

(XXL available in natural only). You can get yours from any volunteer at Winnebago County Animal Services or at any of our functions - just check out the events on our website. The price is \$15 and all profits go to the volunteer auxiliary so that we can continue to help the homeless animals at the shelter. ▲



Disposable Pets (cont. from page 1)

People who send their dogs to school (canine training classes), just like they do their kids, are the ones that end up with a pet that is happy, healthy, well-mannered, well-adjusted within the family and society. In fact, statistics show that those who train their pets have a much higher rate of keeping their pets long term than those who don't, despite any unforeseen challenging circumstances (e.g. illness, moving, allergies, etc.).

The quintessential question we are asked at the shelter everyday is "Can I return him/her if it doesn't work out?" Unfortunately, this is exactly what perpetuates the "disposable pet syndrome". It is as though a pet should come with a "return policy" if he doesn't behave. (Gee...do any kids come with that?) It is this mentality of "getting rid" of the pet when it is no longer easy, problem-free, or convenient that gives birth to the idea that the pet is a "throwaway." (aka "disposable"). The high majority of pet returns and pets being relinquished to the shelter could have been avoided if only the guardian had taken the time to properly train, exercise, and socialize the pet or had learned how to use behavior modification to correct various misbehaviors.

So when you go to the shelter looking for your next companion, ask yourself "What kind of commitment am I willing to give?" If you are looking at puppies or kittens, look beyond "the cuteness factor" and think about what will be required to give this animal a lifetime of proper care. If your circumstances change, are you still willing to keep this pet and give

him/her a loving home with daily exercise, discipline and affection?

When your puppy ceases to be so 'cute' (a hazard of growing up), wakes you up in the night, barks, digs, chews your new shoes, has accidents in the house, pulls on the leash, etc. can you put in the time, effort, and money to train and exercise (sometimes extensive) to alleviate energy and boredom-related problems? What about when your cat urinates outside of his litter box or keeps waking you up in the middle of the night (cats by nature ARE nocturnal, remember.)? Are you willing to get a professional trainer or behaviorist to help you overcome issues?

Every year 6-8 million stray and unwanted dogs and cats enter shelters nationwide; 3-4 million of those never come out again. If society would take pet adoption as serious as child-rearing, these numbers could be changed dramatically!

The number one rule in choosing your new companion is to *take your time!* Pick a pet that not only appeals to you, but pick one that fits your activity level, your energy level, your desired breed characteristics, your budget (food, veterinarian costs, and grooming bills) and one who will most likely fit in with your family and lifestyle. Be honest with yourself in what you are willing to handle. Find out if this is an easy, average, or high maintenance pet and then consider your tolerance level. Talk in depth with an Adoption Counselor at the shelter. The more you tell them about you and your lifestyle, the better they can help you choose the right pet for you. ▲

No Expiration Dates on Adoptable Pets!

Unfortunately, we are often plagued by rumors stemming from misinformation. All too often we hear people coming into the shelter asking how long an animal has before it is euthanized. Truth be told, *the pets up for adoption do NOT have expiration dates.* We keep them available for adoption until they are adopted. The only exceptions are when the pet may have a negative behavior change (which often is a result of becoming "cage crazy" after being confined for too long) OR if the animal suddenly exhibits a health problem in which we cannot handle. Our small isolation rooms are often full with pets recovering from minor problems.

As for space issues, when it comes to the dogs we usually have plenty. However, the cats often pose a different problem. Due to the many, many cats and kitten litters that are brought in and a significantly lesser number of cats being adopted, we often have to euthanize for space.

Additionally, the cats/kittens are often threatened with contracting an upper respiratory infection. This can spread like wildfire in a room where cats are closely confined and visitors are going from cat to cat touching them. Although a simple problem to treat, the cats MUST be isolated and our only option if the isolations rooms are full (as they usually are) is to put the cats in foster homes until they recover. Unfortunately, we never have enough. If you can offer your home to a sick cat(s), please contact Donna at 319-4100 (certain regulations apply). ▲

Where Does that Puppy Come From?

Some of you may have heard the term "puppy mill" before. Maybe your neighbor has told you not to buy pets or supplies from stores that sell puppies. But do you really know what a puppy mill is, or why you should avoid shopping at stores that sell puppies?

A puppy mill is a breeding facility that houses dogs and seeks to maximize profits by keeping costs low. It can be local or out of state, big or small. Regardless of size or location, mills all have one thing in common: the dogs that are kept there are forced to live in deplorable conditions. The parents of the puppies who are sold in pet stores live in small wire cages their entire lives. Their feet never touch a single blade of grass and they are denied any human interaction. Some puppy mills house hundreds of dogs at their facility. Most of these dogs do not receive veterinary care and suffer from conditions such as malnutrition, dental disease, skin infections, and lack of grooming, as well as genetic disorders. These genetic disorders are often passed on to their offspring. Puppy mills are very stressful for the adult dogs as well as their puppies, and this stress can adversely affect the puppies' behavior and learning ability throughout their lives. Studies cited by the Ameri-

can Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals revealed that "bitches chronically stressed during pregnancy produced puppies that were more fearful...and showed impaired learning and memory abilities".

shipped across the country to be sold in stores. These puppies have had little or no socialization and a very stressful beginning to life. Unsuspecting consumers pay \$700 or more for these unsocialized and sometimes genetically defective puppies.

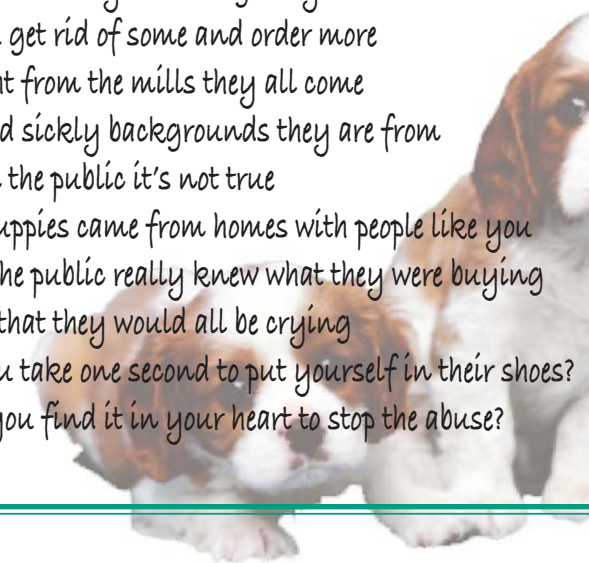
Dateline (NBC) has done research and aired reports on the horrors of puppy mills in an attempt to educate the public. Consumers should never purchase a dog or cat from a pet store. Instead, they should visit a shelter (around 25% of shelter dogs are pure-bred) or locate a reputable breeder. Shelter staff will help you find the right pet for your family by asking questions about your lifestyle and daily activities.

But how does this all affect my local shelter, you ask? Many people who stop at the pet store are just browsing and aren't ready for a lifelong companion. When they see the cute fuzzy faces it is hard to say no, and so they buy the puppy on impulse, not thinking about whether they have

the time or money to properly care for the pet. In time, many of these impulse buyers realize they do not have the ability to care for their new pet. In addition, the dog may be lacking in training or proper socialization, making it more

(continued on last page)

Do you sleep well at night?
Tucked in your warm bed so tight
While they suffer at your hand
It's time for us to make a stand
It's amazing to me, that mills could still be
How can you just ignore the cruelty?
Locked in small, filthy cages so tight
We all know it's not right
Yet your pocketbook weighs bigger than your heart
To look into your conscience would be smart
It's not necessary to sell dogs at your store
Yet you get rid of some and order more
Straight from the mills they all come
Sad and sickly backgrounds they are from
You tell the public it's not true
These puppies came from homes with people like you
But if the public really knew what they were buying
I know that they would all be crying
Can you take one second to put yourself in their shoes?
Could you find it in your heart to stop the abuse?



Some of you may wonder what does my local pet store have to do with a puppy mill? Research done by Hearts United for Animals, a rescue group, has shown that 98% of puppies sold in pet stores come directly from puppy mills. Puppies are taken away from their mom before they are eight weeks old and

PAWSITIVE KIDZ

Helping Local Pets

We often get calls from kids' parents/teachers looking to help them complete a community service project or working to earn a scout badge by helping the animals at WCAS. Below are various ideas you can use, however feel free to be creative!

- ✓ Collecting items from the wish list
- ✓ Tour of Animal Services
- ✓ Each scout could write a letter to the editor on spay/neuter, not letting your pet roam, microchipping or the importance of your pet wearing an ID, adopting a shelter pet, encouraging people to take their dog to training classes, etc.
- ✓ Making dog or cat holiday baskets with items for the animals
- ✓ Folding paper grocery bags for cat cages
- ✓ Making dog biscuits using animal friendly recipes
- ✓ Organizing animal education seminar with speakers
- ✓ Photo contest (collect donations to determine winner)
- ✓ Teacher pets photo contest (collect donations to determine winner)
- ✓ Organizing animal education booth at local mall or farmer's market
- ✓ Fundraiser that incorporating activities like jogging laps for pledges, jumping for animals, swimming laps, scoring soccer goals, hitting baseballs, etc.
- ✓ Organize an animal movie club or animal movie night complete with animal crackers, and other animal shaped treats – discussion of movie afterward, impacts on community, etc.
- ✓ Animal themed birthday party – attendees bring gifts for shelter animals
- ✓ Pet supply drive
- ✓ Building dog houses for needy pet owners
- ✓ Organizing a walk for homeless animals (raises awareness too)
- ✓ Jogging for pets event at school
- ✓ Bake sale to raise money for animals (combine with awareness info)
- ✓ Pennies for Puppies
- ✓ Making cat friendly toys
- ✓ Cash for Critters
- ✓ Organize an animal art contest at school



NEWSROOM

Multiple Pets May Decrease Children's Allergy Risk

(Hey kids! Need another reason to talk your parents into getting another pet?)

Children raised in a house with two or more dogs or cats during the first year of life may be less likely to develop allergic diseases as compared with children raised without pets, according to a study in the August 28 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association. The study was supported by the Natl. Institute of Allergy & Infectious Diseases and the Natl. Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

"The striking finding here is that high pet exposure early in life appears to protect against not only pet allergy but also other types of common allergies, such as allergy to dust mites, ragweed, and grass," says Marshall Plaut, M.D., chief of the allergic mechanisms section at NIAID.

PAWSITIVE TEENZ

Hello Everyone, my name is Cat. I'm 14, and at my school you need 9 hours of community service a year in order to graduate. Lucky for me, my mother works for Winnebago County Animal Services, and for my 9 hours this year I helped my mother foster 4 puppies.

For 10 days I got the chance to care for the 4 puppies, 3 Bichon Poodle mixes, which were 6 weeks old, and a Shih-tzu, which was 7 weeks. There were two boys and two girls. The two boy Bichon Poodle mix puppies were Henry and Fred. The girl Bichon Poodle mix puppy was named Quinn, and the last of the puppies, the Shih tzu, we called her Tessa.

Every morning I would get up at 6:30 AM and let the puppies outside to go the bathroom. They would stay outside for 5 minutes, or until they were messing around. Then I would take them inside, after I had put newspaper down on the tile floor, so the puppies could eat, and in case they accidentally go to the bathroom. After that they would just run around until I had to put them in their kennel, when I had to leave for school. When I got home from school, I'd let the puppies outside once again and then take them back inside to eat and play. They would run around the house until it was time for bed. Then I would take them out one last time, and then put them in their kennel for the night. All 10 days were exactly the same way.

Henry, He was the calmest of the two boys. He had an off white, curly fur coat, short stubby legs, and a long body. Henry and Fred would fight a lot and they would gang up on the girls. He would always get embarrassed when one of the girls would pin him down. Then he would go lay down somewhere else until Fred needed help.

Fred, he was the rowdy one. He would always get himself into trouble. He looked just like Henry, only he was quite a bit fluffier. He always seemed to think he was the boss of everyone, or that is until Tessa would lay on him and put him in his place. This always seemed to start up a fight between all the puppies.

Quinn, she was runt of the litter. She had a pure white, curly fur coat. She was the calmest of the 4 puppies. She didn't do a whole lot. She just liked to lay there and enjoy the things around her. When Quinn barked, it sounded like she was actually talking to you. It didn't sound like a bark at all. Quinn only barked when she wanted you to hold her. Quinn would also stand on her hind legs without anything holding her up for long periods of time. It was an amazing thing for such a little dog to be able to do.

Tessa, she was the biggest of the 4 puppies. She was also a week older and from a different litter; however, the Bichon-Poodle mixed puppies accepted her as one of them. She was the boss. She knew what was right and what was wrong, but that didn't mean that she always listened. She was our favorite.

On Thursday, April 10th Tessa was put down. Tessa had a Parvo Virus. This is a very contagious disease for dogs. It dehydrates dogs and makes them very sick, and will eventually kill them. The following day the other 3 puppies were put down for the same reason. The disease is passed very easily from puppy to puppy because their immune-system is so under-developed. This is why vaccinations are so very important. You never know by vaccinating your dog you might even save a puppy's life, or maybe even 4.



“You never know by vaccinating your dog you might even save a puppy's life, or maybe even four!”

What is Parvovirus?

Parvovirus (parvo) is a viral disease of dogs. It affects puppies much more often than adult dogs. The virus attacks the lining of the digestive system, thus preventing nutrients or liquids to be absorbed. Puppies are especially prone to it because they have an immature immune system. The symptoms are bloody diarrhea, vomiting and lethargy. Usually they stop eating and develop a bloody, foul-smelling, liquid stool. In many cases, dehydration, shock, and death follow. In very young puppies it can infect the heart muscle and lead to "sudden" death.

Rest assured that parvovirus is specific to dogs alone and cannot be transmitted to humans or other pets of a different species, such as cats.

Treatment generally consists of IV or subcutaneous fluids and antibiotics. There is no cure. Veterinarians can only treat the symptoms, and try to keep the dog alive by preventing dehydration and loss of proteins.

Dogs who have survived parvo can get it again. It strikes fast and without mercy.