When we first had the idea of publishing SHELTER SENSE, someone asked if the same publication could serve both a humane society and a governmental animal control department. It doesn't take long to see that the answer is yes. Despite the animosity that sometimes exists between the two, humane organizations and animal control agencies are (or should be) working toward the same ends: seeing that every animal has a responsible home and is not becoming a public nuisance or adding to the pet population.

By reducing the number of unwanted animals, the community reduces the cost of caring for strays in addition to reducing animal suffering. The goals of animal control and animal welfare are met at the same time.

The animal control agency and the humane group thus have good reason to work together in promoting the idea of responsible pet ownership -- pets should be properly inoculated, licensed, leashed and sterilized. The public must learn that owning a pet is not a right -- but can be a joy when the responsibility is accepted.

Animal control agencies themselves must accept their proper responsibility of efficient and humane animal regulation. Animal wardens need proper training, and the local ordinance must be sound and enforceable. This is the duty of the local government to pet owners and non-owners alike.

Humane societies must commit themselves to finding and implementing practical solutions to today's animal welfare problems, and to encouraging greater public participation. Both societies and agencies must spend wisely the public money with which they operate.

We urge the local government and humane group in each community to shake hands and come out fighting -- not each other any longer but the real opponents -- irresponsibility, waste and cruelty to animals. ■