What’s the funniest (or strangest) thing that’s ever happened to you in your animal welfare work?

That’s the question we asked you for this issue’s Coffee Break. You responded by telling us about all kinds of odd and humorous happenings, from overactive animals to confused customers. While animal welfare is a serious business, your stories reaffirmed that, when pets are involved, a little fun is unavoidable.

A man called to report a stray cat near his building. A volunteer went out and trapped the cat, and a few days later the man called to find out what happened. When we told him we had the cat, he said “Where’s my reward?” When we explained that there was no reward, he just kept demanding “the reward for finding a lost cat.” No matter what we said, he wouldn’t let it go, and eventually he said, “Well, next time I see a stray cat, I’m taking it to another shelter. We’ll just see what that does to your business!” and hung up. We now all enjoy asking each other, “Where’s my reward?” on a regular basis … and we dream of the day we go out of business!

—Liz Pease, director of operations
Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society
Salisbury, Massachusetts

One of our feral cat trappers was helping a woman TNR cats at her home. The trapper forgot her bait food, and asked the woman if she had anything yummy the cats would like. She went inside her home and came out five minutes later with a platter of brownies!

—Leticia Stivers, feral cat program manager
Austin Humane Society
Austin, Texas

I had a man call and say he needed to ask me a question since I dealt with dogs and cats every day. I said sure. He asked if I knew where he could sell his patch of Christmas trees.

—I had a man call and say

—Patricia Bean, executive director
Mitchell County Animal Rescue Inc.
Spruce Pine, North Carolina

One of our seasoned dog-kennel workers was trying to separate two dogs from a massive, unplanned play session in an outdoor pen, and the dogs successfully, and cooperatively, ended up removing the caregiver’s pants, and taking off with them. It was hilarious!

—Jenny Stark, shelter operations coordinator
Fox Valley Humane Association
Appleton, Wisconsin

We accepted two spaniel mixes named Whitey and Brownie. The dogs were not very socialized and were super submissive. Every time you went to pet them, they would pee. One day while I was taking them to their outside kennel, Brownie stopped dead in his tracks and laid on his back for a belly rub. Pleased with his progress, I knelt down beside him, and scratched his tummy. And just as I was telling [him] how proud I was … he peed. It went straight up in the air and into my open mouth.

—Jessica Bettinger, manager
Ruth Steinert Memorial SPCA
Pine Grove, Pennsylvania

Coffee Break
Working at the front desk one day, a woman came in asking if anyone had brought in a white hen. She was very surprised when I answered that, no, there had not been any hens brought in. “Oh,” she replied, “well, she is a house chicken. She wears chicken diapers!”

—Day Nelson, office manager
Healdsburg Animal Shelter
Healdsburg, California

A young lady was relinquishing her dog, and I asked her if it had had its distemper shot. She said “Yeah, but it hasn’t helped his temper a darn bit!” She was serious.

—Jackie Vore, adoption manager
Kokomo Humane Society
Kokomo, Indiana

I am a court-appointed humane officer. Several years ago, I received a call about a white German shepherd that was tied out in the hot sun without shelter in the same spot each and every day. The woman insisted I remove the dog from its abusive owner. Upon responding to the complaint, I found a large, life-size concrete statue of a white German shepherd. The complainant [repeatedly] insisted I had the wrong “dog” until I took her to the home, and showed it to her. Upon seeing it, she insisted a real dog had been tied there and replaced with the concrete statue to trick us.

—Ilka Daniel, director of animal protective services
Humane Society of Vero Beach & Indian River County
Vero Beach, Florida

In volunteering for Cats Anonymous, which is a low-cost spay/neuter group for feral colonies and barn cats, I was working in the prep room shaving cats and giving shots. One female cat had a very unusual, hard, non-uniform swelling in her belly. We thought it was a massive tumor. What it turned out to be was a rabbit that the cat had somehow ingested whole. Needless to say, she had a “rabbit-ectomy.” Had she not shown up that day for a spay, she most likely would not have survived.

—Linda Zwieg, medical technologist
Cats Anonymous
Appleton, Wisconsin

Last year, we had a huge Saint Bernard in our shelter. He was super strong, but we wanted to take him for a walk. So a colleague and I decided to both walk him with two leashes, one on each side. Everything was going great until a dog he didn’t like started barking at him. The property our shelter is on is really hilly. Bob was so strong that he pulled both of us down the hill, and when I say “pulled,” we were both rolling down the hill after him. We both got up hysterically laughing. And then all the sudden, we hear, “That was priceless,” from the office window. The rest of the staff saw the whole thing and were laughing at us from the window. Bob came right back to us, and gave us a look that said, “What happened?” Too bad we didn’t have it on video.

—Laura Kalantaridis, office coordinator
Franciscal Home for Smaller Animals
Radnor, Pennsylvania

I’m new to dog caregiving. One day I saw two Chihuahuas stuck together, backwards (tush to tush)! I had never seen this before and went running for help. When the manager saw, she started laughing at the situation, and me! While the backwards part is odd, being stuck [during mating] is not a medical emergency.

—Brandi Princell, volunteer
National Mill Dog Rescue
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Congratulations to Ilka Daniel, whose submission was selected in a random drawing from those published in this issue. Her organization, the Humane Society of Vero Beach & Indian River County, will receive a free coffee break: a $50 gift certificate to a local coffee shop. “Bone” appétit!