people tend to like or dislike cats for the same reasons. One checks an animal's independence, while the other dislikes her aloofness. One respects the cat for his quiet, dignified nature, while the other suspects him of being sneaky.

Despite this mixed attitude, cats have now topped the American popularity charts. More than 57 million cats are kept in more than 29 million households nationwide, according to a survey conducted by the American Veterinary Medical Association. “Man’s best friend,” the dog, now holds second place at 52.5 million.

So it seems the cat has become America’s new “best friend.” It also seems, however, that the cat, though widely loved, is still widely misunderstood. Our present dichotomous image of cats derives from the diverse treatment we’ve given them over the past 4,000 years. Egyptians worshipped the cat as a god; denizens of the Dark Ages feared and thus abused the cat as the devil’s familiar. By the eighteenth century, the attitude leveled out to a simple, unsympathetic coexistence.

Today, we keep them for companionship. We find them fascinating and complex beings with a wide range of behaviors, emotions, and needs. But we’re only just discovering those needs. Animal control officers can attest to the fact that cats are given less care, less protection, and less respect than dogs. Perhaps this is because, unlike dogs, cats tend to be acquired without much forethought. Most frequently, cats arrive as free “gifts” from friends or relatives, or they may simply find homes as free or almost free spillover from the ranks of the millions of cats brought into animal shelters in the United States—were euthanized that year.

For agencies across the continent, increasing numbers of cats are traveling into increasing responsibilities, staffing needs, and funding shortages. In the face of cat problems that range from overpopulation to blatant cruelty, communities are just now beginning to approach the levels of commitment and funding necessary to solve cat problems adequately.

“In most communities, cat control now is where dog control was in the 1960s,” says Marc Paulhus, HSUS vice president for companion animals. “It’s perfectly understandable from a historical perspective: in the old days, dogs outnumbered cats and were the more obvious threats to public health through rabies, bites, and the spread of disease. Cats were less obvious threats. They bite, but don’t se" as severely. They roam, but don’t sa* as much damage. However, they are even more serious vectors of rabies. And today there are just so many of them.”

By Geoffrey L. Handy

During the 1980s the cat population of the United States grew almost as fast as the national debt. According to the Pet Food Institute, the number of Feline-Americans increased by more than one third during the last decade—at the end of which there were 57.9 million cats presiding over 27.7 million households—and sometime during 1985 cats overtook dogs as the most plentiful companion animals in the land.

Yet despite their present lionization on countless T-shirts, coffee mugs, Christmas cards, calendars, book covers, automobile windows, and even sofas in late-20th-century America, cats also year in shelters with woeful regularity. Members of the American Humane Association’s 1990 Animal Shelter Reporting Study, between 5.7 and 9.5 million cats—out of every five cats brought into animal shelters in the United States—were euthanized that year.

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Six Shelter Goals for 1993

In addition to using public education to elevate the status and status of cats, animal care and control agencies can use their position and influence to ensure their programs reflect a commitment to protecting cats and guarantee they get the treatment they deserve. Two vital steps are refining shelter policies and procedures (see article, page 6) and working toward the achievement of a responsible cat control ordinance and identification system (see article, page 11).

Humane agencies can also focus on several other cat-related goals: promoting the adoption of pairs, persuading landlords to accept pets, promoting the indoor cat, educating about declawing, revising humane cat policies, and promoting spay/neuter.

Adopting Out Pairs

In terms of adoptions, shelters operate with two realities when it comes to cats. On the one hand, fewer people...
value purebred traits in felines than in canines, making a shelter a better perceived source for cats; cats are typically selected on the basis of appearance and personality and less on genetics and selected on the basis of appearance and frequently than their canine counterparts. Cat owners by virtue of their cost (low direct from the streets much more than two or more cats. These pet owners that all adopted cats remain exclusively indoors. The feral cat problem is one of the biggest challenges. With all the animal shelters are better off than others. Regardless, feral cats deserve to be brought in from the elements and be tamed and adopted, if possible, or euthanized if they cannot be placed.

The Indoor Cat
In tandem with espousing the virtues of adopting in pairs, animal-care and -control agencies should educate cat owners about the necessity of keeping cats indoors. While many shelters do not stipulate that all adopted cats remain exclusively indoors, they can work to advise adopters of the many benefits. Indoor cats have a much lesser chance of being victimized by disease, parasites, poisoning, other animals, cruel people, traps, and traffic. They also won’t contribute to pet overpopulation or kill small mammals and songbirds.

The best time to persuade cat owners to keep their cats indoors is when they first obtain the pet; after that, helping an indoor-outdoor cat adjust to life inside is much more of a challenge, one that few pet owners are willing to meet. While cats are more commonly accepted in rental housing than dogs, they remain excluded from the majority of rental properties.

The Year of the Cat is an excellent time to persuade landlords to accept cats—and allow pairs of cats. Tell rental property owners the facts about declawing. The procedure for declawing a cat is called an onychectomy, which involves the removal of the claw and end bone of each toe. Cats convalesce for one to two weeks, during which time the pain gradually diminishes. In essence, declawing is an invasive, surgical solution to a behavioral problem.

Cats typically undergo this painful procedure at the behest of pet owners too lazy to spend time solving the fundamental behavioral problem—scratching expensive carpeting or furniture. The truth is that the vast majority of cats can, with diligence, be trained not to scratch where they shouldn’t. Cat owners who subject their pets to the painful operation are simply looking for a quick fix.

Many animal shelters specifically forbid adopting out cats to prospective owners who express an intention to have the cat declawed. Most of these shelters try to match previously declawed and surrendered cats with those who live in rental housing that requires that cats be declawed. Humane agencies should supplement these responsible adoption laces with educational articles in their newsletters, informational materials in the shelter lobby, and other public education efforts.
Evaluating Incoming Cats
Shelters routinely consider age, medical condition, temperament, willingness to use a litter box, and point of origin (stray or owner-surrender) in deciding whether to designate a cat for adoption or euthanasia. Because the supply of adoptable cats generally outnumbers the supply of adopters, the screening process may not be especially fine-tuned. But shelters can increase their chances of identifying the cats most likely to make successful adoptions by giving frac­tions of cats “a calm-down period” before making the decision on whether to euthanize, says Suzanne Hetts, Ph.D., a certified animal behaviorist with the Denver Dumb Friends League (1800 South Quebec, Denver, CO 80231). “Familiar environments and routines are often more comfortable to cats than they are to dogs,” says Hetts. “When a cat is surrounded by unfamiliar sights, sounds, smells, noises, and other cats, he can get pumped up pretty quickly. Even cats who come in with a good history— they’re friendly, good with kids, and so on—can be really up. We give those cats a 24-hour, calm-down period and re­examine them a day later to see if they’re more composed, approachable, and friendly.” Despite the 24-hour calm­down period, however, cats who bite, scratch, or hiss at someone should rarely if ever be held for adoption.

Medical Tests and Inoculations
Incoming cats and kittens should be isolated in rooms separate from the existing shelter population until the newcomers can be examined by a veterinarian. Ideally, new arrivals who pass a veterinary exam should remain in quarantine a minimum of 14 days, because a passing grade on a veterinary exam does not guarantee that a cat is not incubating a disease. Moreover, a cat’s immune system takes five to seven days or longer (depending on a cat’s age) to begin developing a response to any vaccines he or she might have received in his former home.

There is no debate regarding the advisability of isolating and examining new arrivals. Discussion begins over vaccination policy. Some shelters, hoping to encourage persons who adopt cats to establish a relationship with a veterinarian, do not vaccinate cats before they are taken home by adopters. That strategy may be effective, but the risk is that some cats may in fact become sick because they were never vaccinated. John Snyder, director of Alachua County Animal Control (3400 NE 53rd Avenue, Gainesville, FL 32609), worked to foster the owner-veterinarian relationship by persuading the local veterinary medical association to provide free exams to persons adopting a cat from Alachua County. Because the shelter spays or neuters all cats before releasing them to their new owners, part of that exam involves removing a cat’s stitches. The exam does not include vaccinations: Alachua County Animal Control provides that. “We also test for feline leukemia,” says Snyder. “Cats who test positive are destroyed.” Those who test negative get a four-way vaccine that protects against feline rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, parvovirus, and chlamy­dia. (One vet recommends using killed vaccine because “it won’t cause systemic infections and there is no danger of live viruses from the vaccine being shed in the cats’ feces.”) “The ‘fe-leuk’ test is the only one we do currently,” says Snyder. “We don’t take the time to do focus on cats; we just want them through. This process could be refined. For example, we might do feline leukemia inoculations if money were not a consideration. But we feel like we’re hiring the high­light.”

Keeping Cats Healthy in the Shelter
Health examinations, rigorous sanitation procedures, and the careful handling of cats are the foot soldiers in the war against disease and odors in a shelter. Troops often need air support, however, and that can be provided by an air-purifi­cation system which exchanges stale air for fresh. Properly selected and installed, an air purifier can remove 98 percent of the bacteria, viruses, odors, fumes, smoke, dander, and dust that pass through it. Air exchange and purification are especially important in fully enclosed shelters that want for a breath of outside air. Most areas of a shelter will benefit from air purifiers, but the cat room is where an air purifier will do the most good. And the type of purifiers that do the most good, says Bill Brothers, president of Animal Care and Equip­ment Services (P.O. Box 3275, Crestline, CA 92325), are “media-type purifiers that utilize various absorbing media to filter out particles and odor.”

Brothers recommends the High Efficiency Particulate Absorber (HEPA) system, which is used in human operat­ing rooms. This system is designed to filter out extremely fine particulates such as viruses and bacteria. To be considered to staff and adopters, Brothers also recommends a charcoal filter for elimi­nating odors.

Depending on their size and place­ment, purifiers can exchange the air in a building, room, or portion of a room. During an exchange, all the air in a designated vicinity passes through the purifying machine. Although air-purifi­cation systems are capable of providing various rates of air exchange, 10 to 12 exchanges per hour is a desirable rate. What’s more, several purifiers are better than one large system. A large system is often too expensive, and smaller systems allow more flexibility in meeting purifica­tion needs in various parts of a facility.

Handling Cats
Some diseases can be spread by persons who come into contact with cats while caring for them or cleaning their cages—the fewer the persons handling cats, the less chance of spreading infec­tion. Shelters should assign only one or two persons to work with cats—persons who will establish a routine for care, cleaning, and disinfecting and who will know which cats are sick and which are not. One of those persons should handle sick cats only. The other should handle healthy cats. If there is only one person in a shelter network with cats, he or she should handle the healthy cats first.

What About Colony Cages?
Some shelters house their cats in colony cages—large, walk-in pens that are big enough to accommodate half a dozen cats. In addition to food and water dishes and litter pans, colony cages should be equipped with scratching posts, perches, floor-to-ceiling “trees” for cats to climb, and, in many cases, a win­dow through which to view the world. The benefits of colony cages are several: They are less stressful on cats. They allow cats to enjoy other cats company. They show cats off to better advantage to potential adopters. Like most blessings, however, colony cages are not without their banes. “ Colony pens are problematic for incoming cats and even for owner give-ups until the animals have been evaluated carefully and held in isolation for a minimum of seven to ten days,” says HSUS’s Paulson. “To do otherwise is to invite disastrous disease problems. Can put into colonies should first be tested for feline leukemia.”

Before remodeling the cat room, shelter personnel should make sure their testing procedures are strict enough and their cats test ma­tically enough to prevent sick cats from being introduced into a colony. Moreover, colony cages should be separately scaled units. This lessens the chance of disease transfer to all cats in the shelter should a sick cat inadvertently be introduced into one colony.

Foster Home Programs
Cat lovers frequently volunteer to help socialize cats in animal shelters. Many times volunteers are willing also to serve
An investment in staff training can ensure that cat procedures are carried out with competence and compassion.

Holding Periods

Although some opponents of pet-limited breeding regulations argue that most of the cats euthanized in shelters are unadoptable, that argument is self-deluding. "Often we’ll have a cat in one of our adoption cages who is very healthy and friendly," says Snyder. "Everything’s right about that cat, but we have six more that have met the same criteria and are waiting for their exposure. Do you pull that cat and destroy her in order to give the other ones a chance to move up? We make those decisions on a daily basis."

"The HSUS recommends a 10-day consideration period for adoption as appropriate for most busy shelters," says Paulus. "After that, other cats should be given the opportunity to be adopted." Some shelters can give a cat more than an opportunity, while others cannot provide as much. For any shelter, of course, the length of time cats can be held for adoption usually depends on the time of year, the influx of incoming cats, and the kennel or catery space available.

Cat-trapping Programs

Most shelters that operate cat-trapping programs do so in one of two ways: an in-house system wherein field officers set traps and monitor them daily or a public loan program whereby a shelter lends a trap—usually after receiving a deposit and sometimes a daily fee—to a person who is being harbored by a problem cat. A person who borrows a trap from a shelter is sometimes given the option of bringing the trap and the captured animal to the shelter or requesting a pick-up by the shelter. Some humane agencies, because of concerns about injury and injury suits, insist on picking up trapped animals themselves.

Paulus has reservations about shelters lending traps. "Many people know very well to whom the cats they trap belong.

Rather than deal with cats related problems by speaking to their neighbors, they borrow a trap, capture the cat, remove the animal’s identification in some instances, and take the cat to the shelter, claiming that he’s a stray. Sometimes that cat is put to sleep before his owner has the opportunity to reclaim him."

Paulus prefers a cooperative approach between the shelter and the citizen. "If a person having a problem with a stray cat calls animal control, I, as a field supervisor, would dispatch one of my officers to evaluate the circumstances and determine where to set a trap, if necessary. The caller would be shown how to reset and bait the trap and would be responsible for monitoring the trap at least twice daily—preferably in the morning and evening—and for calling the shelter immediately if a cat is trapped. The caller would also agree to release promptly any nonaggressive animals who wander into the trap."

Cooperative programs, while labor intensive, also allow ACOS to solve problems in the field. "Typically trapped cats have not come great distances," says Paulus. "By questioning two or three people in the immediate vicinity of the trap, a field officer is likely to find a cat’s owner. Instead of bringing the cat to the shelter, the field officer should interview the owner and explain that there has to be some effort made to confine the cat or to supervise her if she is going to be allowed outdoors. The officer should explain also that there are other legitimate interests at stake in the community—such as a cat killing wildlife, injuring other animals, or defecating in a neighbor’s garden—and should inform the owner if the problem behavior is covered by existing ordinances that deal with stray and/or nuisance animals."

The Indoor-Outdoor Debate

An increasing—and increasingly vocal—contingent of cat lovers, including the HSUS, insists that the "Great Outdoor" is no great shakes for a cat. Indoor cats are less likely to be hit by a car when crossing the living room than when they are when crossing the street. They are also less apt to contract rabies or attract fleas, ticks, or other parasites than are free-roaming animals.

Indoor cats are better regarded by birds and crotchety neighbors, are difficult to steal, and do not result in or otherwise abuse. Other owners do not have to go calling for them all over the neighborhood when it’s time for dinner, and they live longer, happier lives than do outdoor cats. The HSUS, in fact, strongly recommends that all shelters "quite adopted felines to be kept indoors, and that they include the provision in their adoption contracts."

Unfortunately, says Snyder, some shelters—even publicly funded agencies—would invite angry criticism if they denied a potential adopter a cat solely because he or she was not willing to keep the cat indoors. "I don’t think that I could do that, and I know I don’t have the mechanism to enforce it.""She was a very unattractive cat. I finally told the foster owner to bring her in because she wasn’t getting any exposure sitting at his house. At the same time we had a call from a man who had adopted from us about 10 years ago. His cat had just passed away. He just fell for this cat in an instant. And it was clear that the cat had fallen in love with him."
The best time to educate adopters—and their kids—about proper cat care and responsible pet ownership is when they first obtain their new companion.

A veterinarian can supply a complete list, along with other organizations, provide free pamphlets and brochures that discuss other aspects of responsible pet ownership. Nevertheless, it is essential for the veterinarian to emphasize the importance of early socialization and proper care for the new pet. Providing written materials that discuss common cat behaviors and potential problems can help educate adopters on how to prevent and address any issues that may arise.

Cats are trainable, and with proper training and positive reinforcement, they can become well-behaved pets. However, cats require handling and training from a young age to ensure they develop good habits and are easy to manage as they grow older. Ignoring these early interactions can lead to behavior problems that are difficult to address later in life.

Many cats are shy and Reactive to new people or situations, but with patience and consistency, they can learn to trust and interact with others. Allowing cats to explore new environments and gradually become comfortable in them can help them adjust to new surroundings and meet new people. By providing a safe and secure environment, adopters can help their cats develop into well-adjusted household pets.

Leashing

Leashing is an important aspect of responsible pet ownership, especially for cats. Cat owners should teach their cats to walk on a harness and leash to ensure they receive proper exercise and supervision. Leashing not only helps keep cats safe, but it also allows them to explore new environments and meet new people.

By the time a cat is a year old, they have reached their full size and are ready to be leashed. Fitting a harness and leash to a cat is a simple process, and it is essential to ensure the harness fits properly and is comfortable for the cat. Cat owners should teach their cats to walk on a leash by gradually increasing the length of walks and providing positive reinforcement for good behavior.

The key to successful leash training is consistency and patience. Cat owners should ensure their cats are comfortable and confident in their harnesses and leashes before taking them outside. By following these steps, cat owners can ensure their cats receive proper care and attention, and their pets will be happy and healthy for years to come.
will accept leash laws for cats as well as dogs.

Collars and Tags

Following an educational campaign on cats, communities may better understand why identification for free-roaming cats is logical and necessary. Still, this is where animal control is bound to encounter stubbornness.

Everyone likes to think their cat is "different." It's in the nature of cat owners. Shelter workers often hear "he just refuses to keep a collar on." This is often true, but cat owners should be taught, as with any other cat training, to be comforting but determined.

The most common argument against a collar and tag is that cats will get hung up and strangle themselves on collars. Neither The HSUS nor the American Humane Association, however, have any reports on record of this happening. This is not to say that it never does happen, but the chances are extremely remote.

"Besides," says Paulhus, "in terms of life and death, it is far more likely that a cat will die from a bird or a raccoon than as a result of getting hung up by a collar."

"All animal shelters should include in the adoption fee the price of a collar and tag," says Gilman. "No animal should leave the shelter without wearing one."

This way, enthusiastic new pet owners will at least start off on the right foot.

Alternative Identification

For those still adamantly opposed to collars and tags for cats, a new form of identification may be more acceptable—ear tags. A small tumbler and polished metal tag the diameter of a pencil eraser is inserted like a pierced earring into the base of the ear.

The Brazos Animal Shelter (P.O. Box 4191, Bryan, TX 77805-4191) has been conducting a pilot program with 90 cat owners. "The community and all the cats owners are very excited about it," said Kathryn Rice, Executive Director. The shelter, which has been licensing cats since 1984, found that the major problem with compliance was that people would buy tags but not make their cats wear them.

Veterinarians sell licenses in the community along with rabies vaccinations, and install the ear tags. Few complaints have been aired by pet owners or veterinarians. "The only owners who came back for reinstallation (because tags were either too tight or fell out) were anxious to replace them. The cats are amazingly unaffected—there's no trauma, upset, bleeding, or restraint required to install the tags, and the cats have no problem at all with them after installation. If installation is correct to begin with, cats are identified for life."

Rabies Control Through Identification

In several states, rabies in cats is reaching near-epidemic levels. In fact, cats are now one of the most common rabies vectors in wildlife in the U.S. California is representative of much of the country. "At the present time, there are over six million owned cats in California (based on the current human census data) and the population is increasing," says a letter by the Veterinary Public Health Unit of the California Department of Health Services. "The vast majority of these cats (more than five of every six) is unvaccinated for rabies. Cats are involved in over 10,000 reported animal bite exposures a year [in California alone] so that animal-control agencies can return them to their owners," says Paulhus. "I'd rather get a parking ticket on my car than find my car towed. Automatic impoundment is like mandatory licensing. Licensing solves the whole problem. We know where the animal lives, we take it home, we give the owner a citation, the animal is licensed, and we give them a small fine. When owners of unlicensed, impounded animals reclaim them at the shelter, they will find that it would have been much cheaper, and much less of a hassle, to buy a license."

The Single Most Significant Reason for Requiring Animals to be Identified is so that animal-control agencies can return them to their owners," says Marc Paulhus, HSUS vice president for companion animals. Information about the other benefits of mandatory identification to the pet owner can include any or all the following:

- It's an easier, more accessible, more organized system for identification of community pets.
- If a cat (or dog) is picked up on the street, the animal control officer may be able to immediately identify the owner and return the animal to his or her home—without having to impound the animal at the shelter.
- If pets are found injured, veterinarians are more likely to authorize immediate emergency care—even before owners are tracked down.
- Since proof of rabies vaccination is required when purchasing a license, a licensed animal who bites someone will not have to be placed under observation at the shelter.
- Licensing supplies a source of revenue to the community.
- Ultimately, taxpayer money, pet owner expense, and the lives of many pets will be saved. Because licensed animals can be returned to their homes instead of being impounded, taxpayers will not be required to pay for as many animals' impoundment, board, or euthanasia.

Mandatory identification is only successful, however, if licenses are easy and convenient to obtain. The following will help ensure compliance:
- Extend the hours in which licenses are sold beyond nine-to-five.
- Since licensing is a community service, station personnel at licensing booths in central locations, such as city hall, shopping centers, grocery stores, or even schools.
- Send renewal notices (including an addressed envelope for checks) by mail.
- Reach new residents by FSAs, newspa­pers, and notices sent with utility bills.
- Extend to city and county officials.

Ear tags may prove to be the wave of the future in cat identification. Agencies have made a convincing argument that identification is imperative, the public will be more willing to accept a mandatory identification system. But before any ordinance is introduced, local shelters and societies have to "sell" licensing as a service—both to the public, and to city and county officials.

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**Enhance Your Activities with Year of the Cat Materials**

Celebrate the Year of the Cat in your community with the help of specially produced materials. Created specifically for distribution by non-profit humane societies and public animal-control departments, the promotional items include a poster, brochure, t-shirt, and bumper stickers.

Artist Suzy Becker, author and illustrator of *All I Need to Know I Learned From My Cat*, has lent her talents to create the lively Year of the Cat poster and brochure. The whimsical poster encourages readers to celebrate this special year through such steps as adopting a cat, neutering a cat, and being loved by a cat. Entitled, "How Well Do You Know Your Cat Facts?", the engaging brochure bursts ten common myths about our feline companions. (The inside of the brochure, in fact, is presented as a reproducible on the opposite page for use in newsletters or other print media.)

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**ORDER FORM**

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- Total $ for shirts

**YEAR OF THE CAT POSTERS**

- $2.00 each, 1-49
- $1.25 each, 50-100
- $1.00 each, 100+
- Total # of posters
- Total $ for posters

**BUMPER STICKERS**

- **Featuring the Year of the Cat logo**
- $0.50 each, 1-49
- $0.35 each, 50-100
- $0.25 each, 100+
- Total # of bumper stickers
- Total $ for bumper stickers

**CAT MYTHS AND FACTS BROCHURES**

- $0.30 each, 1-49
- $0.25 for a bundle of 50
- $0.20 for a bundle of 100
- $5.00 for shipping and handling
- TOTAL $

Please allow 4 weeks for delivery. Please make checks (in U.S. dollars) payable to: YEAR OF THE CAT/MSPCA to Year of the Cat, 350 S. Huntington Ave., Boston, MA 02130. For more information, call (617) 522-7400.

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ANIMAL CARE
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Go for the Name!

March 17-20, 1993

For more information or to register, please see the back inside cover of the November 1992 Shelter Sense, or call 1-800-248-EXPO (national) or 714-338-1192 (international).

Shelter Sense
The Humane Society of the United States
2100 L Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20037

Address Correction Requested