

Pets as Gifts

Gulf Coast Humane Society does support pets as gifts, despite negative connotations by the media and other animal welfare organizations throughout the past.

If you or someone you know is interested in adopting a pet as a gift, we hope that you will choose to adopt as there are so many animals that are looking for homes every day. While we do allow pets to be adopted as gifts, we also choose to provide professional recommendations when making that decision.

Although owning a brand-new puppy is exciting, potential owners must be aware that a dog's average life span can be from 10-15 years. It is very important that owning a dog fits into the long-term plan for the family (Midland's Pet Care). In addition, the recipient should be completely aware of the pet as a gift. The recipient's schedule should be free enough to spend necessary time to help assure a smooth transition into the home.

Similarly, the giver should be completely aware of the lifestyle that the recipient lives. If the recipient is under the age of 12, the child's parents should be ready to assume care for the animal (ASPCA). To better prepare for the future of the animal, we recommend the recipient and everyone in the household to be fully aware of the pet as a gift.

Not only should the recipient be ready to commit their time, but financially as well. There are many ongoing expenses to having a pet including vet visits, food, and other needs that may arise (Pet Finder). To aid with the finances of owning a new pet, there are many resources that offer vaccinations, spay and neuter procedures, and other medical needs at a low cost, or even for free.

With the recipient being prepared to take on the responsibility of taking care of a pet for life, a pet can be a wonderful companion, a great protector, and can keep you active. Not only will the recipient receive a lifelong best friend, but the pet will also have a forever home. Giving an animal as a gift will make a wonderful addition to any family, big or small.

Gulf Coast Humane Society supports giving pets as gifts and will continue to aid pet owners through their journey with their new furry friend.

<https://midlandspetcare.com/is-it-a-good-idea-to-give-pets-as-gifts/>

<https://www.aspca.org/about-us/aspca-policy-and-position-statements/position-statement-pet-s-gifts>

<https://www.petfinder.com/pet-adoption/dog-adoption/pets-as-presents/>

Short Term Fostering

Gulf Coast Humane Society supports short-term fostering for shelter animals. Some people worry that short-term fostering may have a negative effect on an animal's well-being leaving the shelter environment and coming back. Based on research from Dr. Lisa Gunter and Erica Feuerbacher, shelter animals have a decreased level of cortisol levels, a marker of stress, during short term fostering. When the animals returned, their stress level returned to baseline, but no higher than it was before (Shelter Medicine).

Short-term fostering can be compared to a weekend get-a-away to let the animal recharge and build their reserves back up. Not only can short-term fostering positively affect the animals, but yourself as well. Fostering an animal is a rewarding act of kindness that can get you involved in a community full of animal-loving people. Research shows that volunteering helps counteract the effects of stress and anxiety (Rescue Dogs 101).

Although there are many pros about short-term fostering, people may still have their apprehensions. Since the history of some shelter animals is unknown, they may come with baggage that will make it difficult for them to be in a house environment. Because of this, fosters should expect a little more extra work to properly care for the shelter animal. In addition, for a short amount of time, foster animals will become a part of your family and will be missed when they leave, but on the bright side, you were able to give a shelter animal a get away from the shelter environment.

Short-term fostering can also act as a learning experience for children. Having a foster animal for a short time can also help build responsibility, compassion, and encourage your children to go outside. Getting the children involved also gives them a sense of purpose and will help them grow as a person (Rescue Dogs 101).

Through short-term fostering, a foster may also find a new best friend. By caring for a shelter animal, a foster may even open their home forever, resulting in a positive "foster fail".

Short-term fostering can act as a trial period for the animal to see if they will be a good fit for your family.

Because of the positive outcomes for the foster as well as the shelter animal, Gulf Coast Humane Society supports short-term fostering.

<https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/2019/07/25/short-term/>

<https://www.rescuedogs101.com/benefits-of-fostering-a-dog/>

Declawing Cats

Because of the negative effects of declawing cats, Gulf Coast Humane Society does not support getting your cats declawed.

GCHS views declawing cats as an act of animal cruelty. In European countries, declawing cats is termed as “unnecessary mutilation” and is completely banned. In this procedure, the last bone of a cat’s claw must be removed, which is equivalent to removing the last knuckle of your finger. When you envision the surgery in that way, it becomes clear why declawing is an inhumane act. This is a painful procedure with a painful recovery period (Declawing).

Since declawing is an amputation, the pain that cats experience after this procedure can lead to very troublesome behavior problems. One of the major issues is not wanting to use the litterbox. The litterbox may cause the pain to feel worse due to the receptors in their paws.

Because of this, cats may get into the habit of not using their litterbox (Navajo Code).

The cat’s body is designed perfectly to give it grace and agility unique to felines. Removing the claws drastically alters the conformation of their feet. This surgery also deprives cats of their primary means of defense in case they get out or are already outside cats. Declawing cats can also result in arthritis on the joints of their paws. Due to the procedure, the tendons must realign, which can cause permanent damage (Declawing).

Even with the negative effects from declawing, owners may still want the procedure done to keep them from being destructive. Similarly, if a cat is getting in fights with other cats or scratching people, declawing might seem like a quick fix in comparison to correcting a negative behavior through training.

There are many alternatives to declawing. For example, owners can provide their cat or kitten with “scratchers” that come in multiple styles and textures. It is important to experiment with different types of “scratchers” to find the one best suited for your cat or kitten. Not only should owners experiment with the type of “scratcher,” but the location as well. When scratching the wrong area, cats should be positively enforced and never punished. Another great alternative to declawing cats is caps for their nails. Nail caps are made from an animal friendly material that allows the cat to safely stretch and retract their nails. An owner can also trim their cat’s nails to help prevent injury and damage to household items (Cat Vets).

<https://www.declawing.com/>

<https://navajocodetalkers.org/14-pros-and-cons-of-declawing-cats/>

<https://catvets.com/public/PDFs/ClientBrochures/AlternativesDeclawing-WebView.pdf>

Retractable Leashes

Because of the possible safety hazards, Gulf Coast Humane Society does not support the use of retractable leashes.

Retractable leashes can cause serious bodily injuries to dogs. When a pet reaches the end of a leash, it can snap their neck back, which causes damage to their trachea and neck vertebrae. Many animals are treated for neck and back injuries, due to retractable leashes and are left with long-lasting effects. Even when keeping the length short on a retractable leash, injury can still occur (Humane Society of HBG).

Not only can these leashes cause injury to dogs, but their owners as well. The cord on retractable leashes is very narrow and can easily get wrapped around fingers or legs causing issues such as rope burn and skin lacerations. Major injuries can also occur like amputation of a digit (Northshore Humane). Since the cord is narrow, it is more prone to breaking if a dog were to run to the end of its length. When the cord breaks, it can quickly snap back and hit the owner and surrounding people in the face and other areas of the body.

Retractable leashes give the owner less control over their pet. These leashes can vary in length, with some reaching up to 26 feet. The further your dog is, the greater the risk. With a longer length, dogs can be more prone to run into the street or approach a person or animal without an invitation (Florida Animal Friend).

Although there are many safety hazards to retractable leashes, owners may want them because of the freedom it allows the dog as well as the convenience of the leash itself. With the varying lengths of retractable leashes, dogs can be able to walk 10, 15, or even 26 feet away from their owner, which provides more space to move around. Retractable leashes can also be more convenient for owners. Some people may not want to deal with the wrapping, scrunching, and adjusting of a standard leash and prefer the click of a button on a retractable leash.

Although Gulf Coast Humane Society does not support retractable leashes, we do not criticize people who do! We encourage owners to use standard leashes for the safety of the pet as well as themselves.

<https://humanesocietyhbg.org/2020/12/01/the-problem-with-retractable-leashes/>

<https://www.northshorehumane.org/4-reasons-why-retractable-leashes-are-dangerous#:~:text=Retractable%20leashes%20can%20cause%20bodily,a%20digit%20can%20also%20occur.>

<https://floridaanimalfriend.org/blog-post/the-effects-of-retractable-leashes-for-dogs/>

Spay and Neuter Position Statement

Because of the negative impact of failing to spay and neuter pets, Gulf Coast Humane Society supports animals being spayed and neutered.

By having this procedure, female pets will have a healthier and longer life. Spaying your pets decreases the risk of mammary gland tumors, which can be cancerous in 50% of dogs and 90% of cats, as well as prevent uterine infections. In addition, neutering male pets prevents testicular cancer (ASPCA).

Not only does spaying and neutering have health benefits, but it also has societal benefits. As many as 4 million homeless cats and dogs are killed in shelters because there is simply not enough room in shelters to provide the care they need. By “fixing” pets, owners are not adding to the number of animals killed every year (Paws Chicago).

Altered pets can also have positive behavior changes. There is a possibility of reduced urges to roam, which decreases the risk of becoming injured or contracting diseases. Research shows that 85% of dogs hit by cars are not fixed (Animal League). Spaying and neutering also decreases aggressive behavior. Studies show that unneutered male dogs are 18 times more likely to bite and unspayed females are 10 times more likely to bite.

At Gulf Coast Humane Society, we spay and neuter our animals at a young age. The reproductive organs of juvenile kittens and puppies are less vascular than adult animals, which allows for quicker surgery with a decreased risk of excessive bleeding. A quicker surgery equates to less time under anesthesia, which in turn reduces the risk of anesthetic risks. Being a juvenile animal, their skin also is more resilient, which results in a faster and less painful recovery post-op (American Humane).

Because spaying and neutering is a major surgery, people may have apprehensions about it. It is a common misconception that this procedure can cause your pet to gain weight. What truly causes weight gain is over feeding and lack of exercise. Another concern that pet owners may have is that spaying and neutering is unhealthy for their pets. As stated above, this procedure reduces the chances of diseases and unwanted behavior.

Gulf Coast Humane Society strongly encourages all pet owners to get their animals spayed and neutered. By “fixing” your pet they will live a longer and healthier life as well as stop the risk of having an accidental litter. There are many organizations that offer free or low-cost clinic services for those who may need assistance.

<https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/general-pet-care/spayneuter-your-pet>

<https://www.pawschicago.org/our-work/spayneuter/benefits-of-spay/neuter>

<https://www.animalleague.org/get-involved/spay-usa/benefits-spaying-or-neutering-pets/>

<https://www.americanhumane.org/fact-sheet/juvenile-spay-neuter/>

