

PETS: Adoption event a success, but some remain



Ethel

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Last week, for three days, PETS and the Tehama County Animal Care Center held the “Home for the Holidays” adoption event. Forty-four animals were adopted. While not all the animals at center were adopted, for those of us involved it was a resounding success. Anytime we can find a homeless animal a home and bring a bit of joy into a life, whether it is human or not, the effort given from all involved is a joyous accomplishment.

During the event, the majority of my time was assisting those that wished to adopt a feline. Out of the 19 cats adopted, the majority were kittens or young adults. Even I have to admit, the young ones are adorable and very hard to resist. The reason I mention this is that two adults remain and I believe you need to hear about them, since they are representative of many adult and senior animals, feline and canine, residing in the shelter.

The first is Lincoln (10-17-17-07) who has now been at the Center for almost 10 weeks. He is an adult who desires nothing more than for someone to pet him and scratch under his chin. A handsome black and white, neutered, Domestic Short Hair boy whose only failing is that he no longer looks like a kitten.

The other is Ethel (12-07-17-3), a remarkable spayed, DSH Tabby approximately eight years old and whose previous owner had her declawed for no apparent medical reason. There is no doubt that Ethel, for years, had been an integral part of a family. She is used to being around and hanging out with people. When she starts purring you can almost hear her saying, "Please take me home with you". Nevertheless, her age and lack of claws seem to contribute, in this instance, to her not having a permanent residence. We all hope that another family will look at her and see what a loving animal she is.

Lincoln and Ethel are just two of the over 2000 animals that arrived at the shelter this past year. With so many other felines available in the county, there is very little to distinguish shelter cats from the hundreds of others. The same can be said of all the dogs. Trying to find permanent homes for all of them, even the cute kittens and puppies, can be daunting. Some animals will be adopted quickly. Regrettably, others may languish in their kennels for months, much like Lincoln.

Shelters are loud and frightening places for any animal. This is especially true for the cats. The life they lead while in the shelter is more stressful and frustrating than is natural or acceptable, and to ignore its effects on their overall well-being is to do them an extreme injustice. For those involved, the impact on the emotional lives of these animals is often difficult to watch and to deal with.

Emotional health can greatly influence physical health. Just like humans, acute stress can reduce appetite, cause upset stomachs and exacerbate existing medical conditions like allergies. Chronic stress compromises the immune system, lowering resistance to infection. The link between stress and feline respiratory disease, for example, has been well documented. Simply put, stressed animals are more likely to develop illness from infectious diseases and be slower to recover from them.

It is challenging for animals in shelters to engage in normal everyday behaviors. In tight confinement, they have little control and few options that can serve as effective vents for their needs. They can't ask to go out to go to the bathroom. They never know who is going to appear in front of them. The day-to-day interactions experienced with people may be inconsistent and unpredictable, making it difficult for them to learn what to expect and adapt accordingly. Over time frustration often mounts, and their physical and emotional health will decline. Dogs and cats who display signs of fear may be misunderstood. They may be viewed as having "problem" behaviors. Meanwhile, their behavior may make it increasingly less likely that they will be adopted.

Now, picture what your own animals do at home. Perhaps they find a cozy cushion or sofa to snuggle up on for a nap, waking up they stretch and explore the house. They may venture into the yard to check out their favorite spot to find a stick to chew on or a ball to play with. They are relaxed for most of the day. Oh sure, they get excited at times, but not panicky or desperate. They look forward to dinnertime, and they always anticipate your arrival home. They seek out and receive positive, predictable social exchanges. They are comforted and content. They are not frustrated or stressed. They are not afraid. These are the actions and emotions we want to see. That is why we want to see every animal have a home, and not just for the Holidays.

From all of us at PETS, we would like to wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas.