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The feral cat problem in Tehama County



Tyler is about 6 months old, litter box trained and very affectionate and playful. For further information, call the shelter at 527-3439. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: February 19, 2021 at 12:57 p.m. | UPDATED: February 19, 2021 at 5:48 p.m.

Not a week goes by that I do not hear someone talk about the feral problem in Tehama County. In many other areas around the world, for centuries, both feral dogs and cats have comprised a large portion of any local stray animal population. Tehama is no exception. For purposes of this article, however, the focus will be on the feline feral.

All feral animals are strays, but not all strays are feral. A stray cat is a domestic cat that has been abandoned or has strayed from home and become lost. Stray cats were once pets and socialized to human touch. They can often be readily reintroduced into a home. Adult feral cats are un-owned domestic cats that live outdoors and avoid human contact. They do not allow themselves to be handled or touched, and usually remain hidden from humans. They may be former pets who, over time, regressed to a wild state or they may be the offspring of felines who never had guardians.

Colonies are groups of feral animals living together. They can be a combination of feral animals and strays that share territory and a food source. Unfortunately, these colonies can grow from a couple of cats to hundreds as each new generation of kittens is born. If these kittens never have human contact, they will also grow into fearful wild cats.

Avoiding humans, feral animals live in the shadows and hidden spots of our community and struggle desperately to exist. Food sources, often provided by dumpsters and garbage or the rodents that feast on the same, are limited. Some feral animals are lucky enough to receive food from benevolent people who do not wish them to starve. Unfortunately, as well-intentioned as these people are, they may be inadvertently contributing to the overall problem if they do not concurrently spay or neuter.

The community where the cats live often views them with disdain due to the cat's scavenging, mating, and territorial behaviors. In addition, the perpetuated misinformation about the effects on wildlife does nothing to aid these animals. Their life, like any other domestic pet who does not have a human guardian, is fret with illness, injury, starvation, and predation.

For many, the way to deal with these creatures is simply to relocate or eradicate them and the colonies in which they live. Research has shown us that this is not an effective fix. Even though the quantity of cats in a locale is reduced, the solution is temporary. Feral cats gather where there are resources: food, water, and shelter. When an existing colony is relocated (or eradicated), before long a new colony of cats will discover the same resources and move in to fill the vacuum.

The only proven method to manage feral cat colonies is Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR). TNR is not about rescuing or eradicating every feral. It is about reducing the number of feral cats in a given area and lowering 'intake euthanasia' rates. It is also about creating a better environment for both the cats and the people around them.

With TNR, each cat in a colony is trapped and transported to a veterinary clinic. At the clinic, the animal is vaccinated, spayed or neutered, and ear-tipped (the ear is trimmed) to identify them as ferals who were sterilized. Once recovered, the cats are returned to their original colony. Ideally, a "caretaker", who is either an individual or a committed group of people, provides food, water, and shelter to the cats. In addition, the caretaker monitors the cats for illness or injury and also for any newcomers who would require TNR. A comprehensive resource for caretakers, or those interested in TNR, is "The Neighborhood Cat TNR Handbook: A Guide to Trap- Neuter- Return for the Feral Cat Caretaker." It is available to read or download at no charge at (https://drive.google.com/open?id=1wmeIVM417jm_K85ZzzoTiNfR46iLPJPe). For those interested in learning more, some additional informative sites are: – Neighborhood Cats (<https://www.neighborhoodcats.org/>) They offer a wealth of information regarding caring for a colony of cats in your backyard, organizing a TNR program or starting a Return to Field program. Alley Cat Allies (<https://www.alleycat.org/>) is a nonprofit advocacy organization whose mission is to protect and improve the lives of cats. Emphasis is on stray and feral cat advocacy and providing information on TNR (Trap-Neuter-Return). Humane Society of the United States (<https://www.humanesociety.org/outdoor-cats>) provides an abundance of information on all types of outdoor cats. And lastly, SPOT- Stray Pets of Tehama (<https://spottehama.com/books-and-guides-%2F-feral>) lists a number of informative books and guides, many of which are free to download.

Society, in general, would prefer that there were no feral cats. Ways to help prevent feral animals is to avoid the initial actions that perpetuate the situation. Ensure that all

pets are safely contained but, if they do become lost, that there is some form of identification on them in order for their guardian to be contacted. Do not abandon domestic pets. In addition, spay or neuter all your pets. Feral cats may never become beloved household companions, but that does not mean their life has no value. Both they and we are part of this community. It is up to us to find viable solutions to coexist.

No paws on the ground



Kurt is about a year old Anatolian Shepherd mix who loves to play and be the star of the show. Call 527-3439 for more information. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: February 12, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. | UPDATED: February 12, 2021 at 10:01 a.m.

“No paws on the ground” is a rallying cry for those involved in the care, rescue, and transport of homeless puppies. It should also be for anyone who has a puppy or dog who has not had a full schedule of vaccinations.

“Why?” is the question. Canine parvovirus type 2 (CPV2), also known as Parvo, is not only the most widespread infectious disease of dogs in the United States, but it is also extremely rampant in Northern California. Highly contagious, exceptionally hardy, and often fatal, it will cause unimaginable anguish to owners and dogs, alike.

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, “The virus is spread by direct dog-to-dog contact and contact with contaminated feces (stool), environments, or people... It is resistant to heat, cold, humidity, and drying, and can survive in the environment for long periods of time... The virus is readily transmitted from place to place on the hair or feet of dogs or via contaminated shoes, or other objects.” A dog can develop the disease when he licks, sniffs, or has contact with any person, animal, or object that has contacted the excrement of an infected dog. Therefore, anywhere a diseased dog empties its bowels is the perfect avenue for you to bring home the virus. Highly resistant, this nasty bug can survive on inanimate objects such as shoes, floors, tires, etc. for months.

Do not believe that with the ground frozen during the winter it is safe to let your puppy run freely. It is not safe. Freezing will not kill the virus. In addition, if you decide to wait for a thaw before safely introducing the new puppy outside, again be cautious. Locations even with good sunlight and warmth can remain potentially harmful. Remember that parvoviruses are extremely hardy, and can survive in the soil for over a year.

The most effective disinfectant against any virus (including parvo) is bleach. Any area believed contaminated should be thoroughly washed with one part bleach mixed with 30 parts water. To kill the virus, provide a minimum of at least 10 minutes of contact time with the bleach solution. However, there must not be any organic material present for the bleach to work. Therefore, remove all feces, urine, and vomit from any object prior to disinfecting with the solution.

To survive parvo, the secret is rapid treatment. Do not delay seeking immediate veterinary assistance if your dog, especially a puppy, begins exhibiting symptoms. After 3-7 days from being exposed, one or all of the following symptoms will appear. The dog becomes lethargic and possibly feverish. If the dog usually has high energy, this is the one of the surest signs that something is amiss. A loss of appetite occurs. The dog will have vomiting and bloody foul-smelling diarrhea. The vomiting and diarrhea are the most dangerous because they quickly lead to extreme fluid loss which results in dehydration and malnutrition. Shock and death subsequently occur.

There are no effective antiviral drugs, so the dog's own immune system must generate the cure. Any treatments given are strictly supportive, so the animal is kept alive long enough for his immune response to generate. Expect that, if the dog is to recover, he will be in intensive care, with at least a 5-7 day stay at significant expense. Most deaths from parvovirus occur within 48 to 72 hours following the onset of clinical signs.

Parvo will affect most members of the dog family, but it will not infect humans. The most vulnerable targets are young puppies with underdeveloped immune systems, and unvaccinated older dogs that have compromised immune systems. Doberman Pinschers, German Shepherds, Pit Bulls, Labrador Retrievers and Rottweilers, as well as other black and tan breeds, seem to be particularly prone to parvo, with a lower chance of recovery than any other breed. It is also worth mentioning that the new, remarkably virulent strain of parvovirus (CPV-2c), discovered in the year 2000, is able to infect cats. Cats, however, if vaccinated against feline distemper, are considered protected.

Treatment focuses on supportive care, but despite a veterinarian's best efforts and thousands of dollars, the animal may not survive. The surest way to avoid infection is to vaccinate beginning when puppies are 6-8 weeks of age. Every 3 to 4 weeks, until the puppy reaches 16 weeks, vaccinations are given. During this period, do not allow them to be with other dogs or go to areas where other dogs have been until 2 weeks after they have had their last vaccination. It is also recommended that boosters be given. There is some thought that annual vaccination is not necessary, especially when adult dogs are considered lower risk. Therefore, do not be surprised if your veterinarian switches to a 3-year schedule for your adult dogs.

Always adopt from a reputable source. Also, if you are unsure if the dog is current on vaccinations, or presents with any symptoms, I cannot say it enough, "Please see a veterinarian immediately!" Remember, parvo is a killer and an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

What it means to be a responsible pet owner



Betty White is a bit overwhelmed by the shelter environment and is looking for a patient family willing to give her time to adjust. Once she has gotten to know you, she will be your new best friend.

(Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: January 29, 2021 at 3:27 p.m. | UPDATED: January 29, 2021 at 6:48 p.m.

Being responsible means being dependable, keeping promises and honoring commitments. Responsible people consider how their decisions will affect those in their care. They do not make excuses for their actions or blame others because of their decisions. They accept the consequences for what they say and do. They behave in ways that encourage those around them to trust them. When we act responsibly, relationships, whether they are within our family, our community or in the world around us, become stronger.

James Herriot, author of "All Creatures Great and Small," is quoted as stating, "I wish people would realize that animals are totally dependent on us, helpless, like children, a trust that is put upon us." Since animals cannot speak to us in words, it can be easy to forget that they have many of the same physical and emotional needs as we do. Ensuring animal welfare is our human responsibility. Like children in our care, that responsibility includes consideration of all aspects of their well-being, no matter what it might be. The coming month of February is deemed "Responsible Pet Owners Month" to remind us that our pets are not inanimate objects to be neglected or mistreated

once their novelty wears off. It is our moral obligation to care for them at a level beyond reproach while they are with us.

So, what is a responsible pet owner? Even though there is not a definitive explanation of what it means, we are certain of one thing: when we have a pet, the expectation is to care for all its needs, whether physical or emotional. No one ever said having a pet would be easy. It comes with challenges, but even during crisis responsible pet owners try their hardest to do what is right. Unfortunately, as many of us already know and for the animals involved, there are the others.

Caring for a pet is like caring for a small child and, like child rearing, the responsibility should never be taken lightly. Not being prepared can be disastrous for the animal. Getting a living creature is not like getting a pair of shoes that can be easily discarded when they do not fit quite right. Therefore, please mull over the following before bringing any pet into your home.

Begin by being honest regarding the lifestyle both you and your family have. It will help determine the type, size, etc. of an animal that will fit perfectly in it. Review your current living conditions and determine if the animal is appropriate in size and energy. If you rent, many landlords will not allow pets. Be sure to check out any restrictions before adopting. If you have, or are expecting, a baby consider whether you will have enough time available to attend to all the pet's needs, too. If there is already a pet present, determine if it will share its home with another animal and the type you are considering.

Depending on the pet, a 10- to 20-year commitment may not be an unusual length of time required to care for it. If circumstances change, such as moving, consider whether you will still be able to care for your pet.

Caring for a dog, depending on its size, is estimated to cost between \$340 to \$635 per year for food, toys, vaccinations, and an annual visit to the vet. Cats and small mammals are estimated to cost less. If the animal gets sick or injured, has special dietary requirements, or takes medication, those costs can increase drastically. In addition, while pet insurance assists with unforeseen medical issues and emergencies, it adds to the yearly costs. As well, long haired, difficult to groom animals may require frequent trips to a grooming facility.

Dogs thrive on exercise and companionship. Cats are healthiest and happiest when treated to play sessions with their human guardians. Both, when constantly unattended, can develop behavioral problems. If work demands frequent travel or, if on most days and evenings you are not home due to other commitments, consider a pet that requires little human interaction.

One of the most common reasons that people return pets to shelters is that they are experiencing behavior difficulties. Training not only strengthens the bond between pet and guardian, but also helps avoid many of those behavior problems. Having a pet requires time and commitment to teach it to become an enjoyable member of the family and community.

Being shy is no different for animals



Vixen is a Mastiff mix about 2 years old. She was quite shy at first but has really come around and is fantastic on leash. Vixen would be a great hiking companion.

(Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: January 15, 2021 at 2:10 p.m. | UPDATED: January 15, 2021 at 6:28 p.m.

Merriam Webster defines shy as being easily frightened or disposed to avoid a person or thing. Shyness in a person is that feeling of apprehension, or lack of comfort, when around other people. It is a feeling which commonly occurs in new or unfamiliar situations. Shy people often want to connect with others, but do not know how, or cannot tolerate the anxiety that comes with interaction. It is not any different for animals.

The word “shy” is often used to describe cats and dogs who are fearful. That fear can come from many different sources, such as new environments and situations, sudden movements, loud and unexpected noises, strangers and anything else that might be unfamiliar. In a shelter environment, we should not be surprised that there are numerous “shy” animals. As I often tell everyone, these animals have had their previous worlds turned upside down and have been thrust into a place foreign to them. Many of the animals in shelters who appear to be shy are stressed by the environment they are in and are quite scared and confused. Some may prove to be outgoing and very social once settled into a new home. Others may remain fearful and need structured, prolonged, safe exposure to warm up to new people and situations.

If you decide to share your life and adopt an animal, whether it is shy or not, any dog or cat will need time and assistance to feel comfortable in their new home. Nurturing a shy animal requires patience and is not for everybody, for they require guardians who have compassion and perseverance. So please, if you are considering adopting a shy animal, determine if your home would be suitable for it. If you have children who are

too young to understand that they must leave the animal alone, then you might want to rethink bringing home a scared dog or cat. If there are adults in the house who believe in harsh “training” methods, then you might want to think twice about bringing home not only a shy animal, but any pet.

Always remember that fear is the underlying cause of most forms of aggression and is a defensive reaction, occurring when the animal believes he is in danger. It is also exceedingly important to remember that the threat is from the animal’s perspective and therefore can be real or imagined. Fearful animals will first try to avoid what is causing the fear but can become aggressive when feeling trapped. If you have a pet who becomes fearful around other animals and people, never put him in situations that could prove disastrous for everyone.

A key to beginning the process of helping a pet get over its fears is to understand what they are telling you. Reading body language is critical in trying to help them. Most shy cats and dogs, given the opportunity, will simply try to run away and go hide. Cats who are fearful may spit, hiss, swat, scratch, puff their fur and tail, arch their back, flatten their ears, and swish their tail back and forth. Some signs to determine if your dog is feeling fear are flattened ears, tail tucked between the hind legs, cowering, lip licking and yawning. Other signs might include dilated pupils, drooling, excessive panting, pacing, trembling, whining, barking and growling. Both cats and dogs may also lose control over bowel and bladder functions. In addition, both may freeze and “shut down” when overwhelmed.

The best possible strategy is to let the animal progress at its own rate. Pushing a shy animal into situations where they are afraid can make them even more fearful. Any kind of pressure usually makes things worse. Let the animal hide if it needs to, investigate things, and come to you when it feels ready. Avoid as many negative experiences as possible early-on. With time, the pet will bond to you and get used to its new home.

Do the pet a favor and provide a small area to call his own for the first few days or weeks away from the normal hustle and bustle of the household. Fearful cats tend to prefer small spaces as large spaces are overwhelming. Set up the cat in a quiet room. A laundry room or bathroom works well. He should have access to food, water and a litter box. Offer a few toys, such as a catnip mouse and a ball to bat. In addition, a synthetic pheromone diffuser will help the cat feel secure. For dogs, a crate with a toy and comfy bedding in a quiet area lets him adjust to his new surroundings slowly. It may take a bit, but eventually the animal, cat or dog, will start exploring for longer and longer periods as its comfort levels rise.

Something else to consider is that other members of the shy animal’s own species can be a strong asset in helping the animal adjust. Some animals who are fearful with people will be quite comfortable as long as another dog or cat “buddy” is there.

Having a shy dog or cat is not for everyone. It can be, at times, quite challenging. But take it from one who has two “shy” dogs. Once you have gained a shy animal’s trust, the rewards of seeing the animal blossom are monumental.

Be the kind of person your dog thinks you are



Donna is a sweet terrier mix who is about 6 years old and heartworm positive. She will need a foster home to help her through the treatment. If interested, call the shelter at 527-3439. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: January 8, 2021 at 12:53 p.m. | UPDATED: January 8, 2021 at 12:54 p.m.

J.W. Stephens' is quoted as saying, "Be the kind of person your dog thinks you are." I will go out on a limb and say that the love that our dogs have for us is one of the purest of affections we shall ever experience. I doubt very few, if any, dog guardians would disagree. Too bad most of us, myself included, are not as worthy as they think we are.

Literature is profuse in its examples of what is extraordinary about dogs, outlining their unwavering loyalty, perception, and desire to serve as a constant companion to the humans with whom they bond. They do not care a whit whether our bodies are less than perfect. They do not judge us on where we live or on what we have or do not have. They do not reject us because of thoughts or ideals. No matter how we look, or act, or think, we are our dog's favorite person. With all that slobbery affection, if our dogs think we are the center of their universe and the person they wish to follow, we really do owe it to them to strive to live up to that love. Our canine companions can teach us a thing or two and, in paying attention to their nuances, perhaps we can learn a few "new tricks" that will make us worthy of that loyalty and affection.

If we wish to be the kind of person our dogs think we are, perhaps we could follow a few of their communication skills. Unlike our furry friends, a number of us, myself included, have a tendency to make poor situations worse. Maybe instead, we should all "avoid biting, when a simple growl will do". On occasion, I will admit, a little growling when displeased isn't a bad thing, but even I know that a better rule of thumb is to wag more and bark less. Speaking of which, if someone is having a lousy day why not take another cue and sit close to them, say nothing, and give them a gentle nuzzle (hug)? It works when my furry friends do it with me.

“No matter how often you’re scolded, don’t buy into the guilt thing and pout... run right back and make friends,” anonymous. If you have ever reprimanded your dog, you know that his “guilty” attention span is about as long as it takes you to complete reading this sentence. If we wish to be the kind of person our dogs think we are we, too, should learn not to mope and hold grudges, and quickly move on to the better stuff.

In the book “Dogs Don’t Bite ...” by Matt Weinstein and Luke Barber, there is a chapter called “Dogs Know That Every Rear End Has Some Valuable Information.” We need to seriously think about that sentiment. When we are guilty of surrounding and insulating ourselves with those who are nearly identical in thought and opinion, we limit an immense opportunity for ourselves to grow. In addition, when we do that we divide our world into those who are perceived “useful” and those who are perceived as being “not useful”. Let’s face it, history has proven how dangerous thinking like that it is. So, if my dogs can sniff the cat’s butt and glean information, there is probably no reason why, whether I like them or not, another person’s story cannot provide some useful tidbit that will help me navigate through my life. And, perhaps, assist me in becoming more of the person my dogs think I am.

If we wish to be the kind of person our dogs think we are, one of the greatest lessons we can learn from them is to give and receive affection unconditionally. Our dogs wag their tails when they see us, no matter what our mood is. They give us those wet sloppy kisses, no matter how we have behaved, because they love us. Unconditional caring isn’t easy, but it’s something that surely would make our world a better place if we all just tried. Remember, also, that all you need to become a dog’s new friend is a toy in hand and the inclination to go out and play. Maybe if we all acted a little more like that, making more friends would not be as difficult.

When dogs go for a car ride they don’t care where they’re going, they just enjoy the trip. Feeling the wind across their face and sniffing the air while sticking their snout out the window certainly doesn’t diminish their fun. How often do we forget that the journey to where we want to be is what matters most? When our expectations are not met, how often do we get frustrated, angry, or even depressed? If we wish to be the kind of person our dogs think we are why not immerse ourselves and enjoy every moment of the journeys we take in life and stop being so serious?

We can learn a lot from our dogs. They stick with their pack. They eat with gusto. They live in the moment. They are not afraid of getting messy. They like their naps. They enjoy playing. If we wish to be the kind of person our dogs think we are, perhaps we should become more like them. After all, what have we got to lose?

Celebrate Happy Mew Year for Cats Day



The staff members at the Tehama County Animal Care Center are on quarantine due to COVID-19. The shelter is expected to reopen in early January. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

January 2, 2021 at 3:14 a.m.

Coming up with a subject on a weekly basis can sometimes be a bit daunting, not because there is a lack of material, but often because there is a plethora of items about which to write. There are so many choices that the decision can be difficult. Sometimes to get my thought processes moving, I try to find out what holiday or celebration is pertinent to the current time frame.

For example, did you know that today, January 2, is World Introvert Day, Science Fiction Day, Happy Mew Year for Cats Day, Motivation and Inspiration Day, Buffet Day, Personal Trainer Awareness Day and Pet Travel and Safety Day? Considering that last year was not one of the happier ones we lived through, I am thinking we should start this year on a more jovial note.

Any cat owner will tell you that cats consider themselves to be, by far, the most superior biological specimens. The well-known quote, “Dogs have owners, cats have staff” is just one of the many humorous references that confirms it. So, as ridiculous as it may sound, it should not surprise us that there is a Happy Mew Year For Cats Day just for them.

Even though the thought might fit into today also being “Science Fiction Day”, according to the creators, wellcat.com, cats do not celebrate the new year, they celebrate the “Mew Year”. The official description, again according to wellcat.com, reads, “Felines, ever above mere humans in the great chain of being, have a day unto themselves to celebrate the ‘mewness’ of a new time.” Honestly, I couldn’t make this stuff up if I tried.

So I suppose, then, the day is to be when our feline companions can consider the brand “mew” season and all the “purrfect” possibilities it holds. Will this be the year the dog realizes that the cat is actually the king of the household? After all, don’t we understand that “Cats rule and dogs drool”? The multitude of questions that can be pondered by kitties today, while they go about their normal business of looking aloof and disinterested, truly does boggle the mind. I know I am overwhelmed at the mere thought.

I share these days simply as a way of sharing a little humor with the world. I, for one, enjoy knowing that in this crazy, stressed-out world someone, somewhere out there has created, or is celebrating, a day such as “Answer Your Cat’s Question Day”, “If Pets Had Thumbs Day”, and “Dance Like a Chicken Day”. Unless you are humorously challenged, I cannot imagine how a person would not smile at the thought of some of these days. Many of these holidays are all in good fun, but the truth is that many of the animal-related holidays throughout the year help raise awareness about the overwhelming number of unwanted, neglected, or abused pets that end up in an animal shelter. And what is a better way of getting attention to some serious problems, than with a little tongue-in-cheek humor?

Now obviously, if we are going to help any cat celebrate the Mew Year, catnip is definitely on the list of things to get him. In addition, I am sure he would appreciate some special treats and a few extra toys. For your peace of mind, and his health this year, be sure that he is also current on vaccinations and has had his yearly physical at the veterinarian.

If you do not have a cat but want one, then it is time to take action. As you are welcoming this brand New Year into your own life, why not consider opening your heart and your home to a new four-legged friend as well? I know for a fact that the Tehama County Animal Care Center at 1830 Walnut St., Red Bluff (527-3439) has a number of critters with a great variety of personalities to suit your needs, ranging from those aloof regal cats to love bugs that just want to cuddle all day on your lap. They can be graceful and beautiful, or just clumsy and silly. With so many reasons to adopt a cat or kitten there is no reason not to go down to the shelter to at least look. Seriously, what better way is there to celebrate a new start than to also give a homeless feline a fresh new chance?

If you are not ready or able to adopt, then consider fostering. Fostering not only assists the shelter immeasurably by freeing space and resources, but also provides the care kittens and some cats may need prior to adoption. If interested and would like to learn more about the foster program, please call the Tehama County Animal Care Center (527-3439). Finally, if you cannot adopt or foster, perhaps you could donate either supplies or money, all of which is useful and greatly appreciated.

And, as one of the strangest holidays to celebrate just how much we love the feline population comes to an end, why not take a chance and give one of them the hug I know you are dying to give. Who knows, you just might be able to get away with giving a quick embrace without the unpleasant effect of shredded arms. But don’t be disappointed if they refuse to hug you back. After all, that’s how cats roll.

A very Happy Mew Year to you!

Veterinarians and pet owners



Louie is a beagle mix who is looking for a foster or foster-to-adopt home to help him through the treatment for heartworms. He is a 4-year-old silly, wiggly boy who has to be kept quiet through the treatment. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: December 25, 2020 at 12:08 p.m. | UPDATED: December 25, 2020 at 4:05 p.m.

As we head into the New Year, there is a glimmer of hope that there might be an end in sight for the pandemic that has brought us to our knees, in more ways than we care to count, this past year. But in spite of that hope, both veterinarians and pet owners are voicing concerns regarding their increasing frustration as this relentless COVID-19 virus continues to impact lives.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) says a combination of factors is making it harder for pet owners to book timely veterinary appointments at the practices they know and trust. In addition, Veterinarians are doing their utmost to follow recommendations made by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the AVMA, and all local, state, and national regulations, to protect staff and clients equally, while providing the highest-quality medical care to the animals. It is a tall and almost unattainable order to achieve while keeping everyone happy, satisfied, and healthy at the same time.

So why is it hard to get a timely appointment? To begin with, vets are dealing with a multitude of issues, including the rising number of veterinary appointment requests and the need to offer services in new innovative ways. According to the data, during March and April, when the pandemic first took off, visits among existing veterinary clients dropped by about 25 percent. Many, out of fear for their own health, put off their pet's routine visits earlier during the year, when COVID first emerged. Now they have no choice but to get those booster shots and physicals done.

Although regular wellness checks and staying up-to-date on vaccines is important, veterinarians must prioritize their appointments. Let's face it, emergencies, where a

pet is in life-threatening danger, are going to be handled before a pet that only needs a booster shot.

In addition, with more people working from home, potential pet problems needing to be addressed by a veterinarian are being noticed more frequently, thus causing an increase in client visit requests. One must also add to the equation that any veterinary visit will take longer because of protocols needing to be observed, to keep everyone safe. It is no wonder that early appointments may be more difficult to obtain.

We must also remember that most clinics have a limited number of full-time staff members. If one of those regular employees tests positive, other staff members that came into contact are required to quarantine, in accordance with all health-governing agencies. This could mean that in a small clinic, most, if not all, of the full-time staff could be quarantined anytime someone has been exposed. Without those individuals, the location may be only able to offer extremely limited services for a period of time, thus further reducing the number of clients that can be assisted. Again, frustration looms for both entities.

The hard, ugly truth is that COVID-19 has forced many veterinary practices to pivot in terms of how they operate and how they will allot their time and resources. Rotating or limiting existing staff, providing curbside service, and telemedicine are among the adjustments adopted by some practices.

What does all this mean to you as a pet owner? If you are not ill and your pet is not ill, call your veterinarian to discuss whether an in-person visit is necessary and, if so, when would be the best time for it. In an effort to reduce potential exposure, your veterinarian may recommend postponing non-urgent visits or procedures. If you would prefer to remain in your home and you have an established relationship with them, and they have seen your pet recently, telemedicine might be the way the visit is conducted. If not, your veterinarian may schedule an appointment utilizing "curbside service."

The protocol being that during the designated appointment, you call the front desk when you arrive, and wait inside your vehicle for a staff member to come out and retrieve your pet. Once inside, the pet will be examined by the veterinarian, who will then call you to discuss their findings and suggested treatments. When the pet is ready to leave, a staff member brings him to your vehicle, so you do not have to enter the facility, thus limiting exposure to all parties.

The most important thing you can do during this unique time is be as patient and understanding as possible. You can help lessen the angst for both yourself and your veterinarian by understanding the why, if your veterinarian requests postponement of elective procedures and less urgent exams. However, if your pet does require medical care, then consider calling before visiting to see if the clinic has changed their hours of operation, and what guidelines they have in place that they would like you to follow. It will avoid a lot of initial misunderstanding. Also, it is helpful to you both if you do not have the expectation that you will be able to enter the practice with your pet.

Your veterinary team is on the front lines giving the best medical care possible and putting their own safety at risk for your furry friends. Please have patience and

remember they really do want to give your pet the finest level of care that they can in these trying times, and they are doing everything in their means to provide it.

Why you should still believe in Christmas



Sophie is a 5-year-old love bug. Her favorite thing in the world is humans and human affection. If you have a lap and a kissable face you might just be perfect for Sophie. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: December 18, 2020 at 4:11 p.m. | UPDATED: December 18, 2020 at 4:12 p.m.

In 1897 an 8-year-old girl wrote the New York Sun and asked if there was a Santa Claus. And like the editor who responded over a century ago, “Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus” I, too, still believe in Santa Claus, along with other intangibles that you cannot see.

So, why would a reasonably intelligent mature adult, who should know better, still believe in a childhood fantasy figure? To answer, let me ask you some questions. During this time of year, do you allow yourself to get involved in the good and wondrous feelings of the season? Do you believe that there is some sort of underlying current of energy that embodies what Santa represents? Granted, you probably do not really believe there is a man who lives in the North Pole and knows whether children have been naughty or nice but, if you think about it, there actually is a certain reality to the Christmas spirit, also known as the Santa stuff.

I value all of the differing viewpoints regarding Santa, and before you suggest that I check myself into some sort of psychiatric facility, hear me out. Who knows? You might also believe, without even realizing it. I would wager that, during this festive time, especially this year, you might be a bit more thankful for family, friends and what you have. Or perhaps you try to spend a little more time communicating with those who are near and dear to you. In addition, you might also feel a little more goodwill

towards others and, possibly, try to help the less fortunate. Helping, hope, good cheer, love, understanding, and goodwill towards men are but a few of the aspects of the Christmas spirit and the embodiment of what Santa is.

Judy, an elf in the movie “The Santa Clause,” said, “Seeing isn’t believing. Believing is seeing.” It isn’t about the decorations or the gifts we get. It is about believing in something much greater than ourselves, something we cannot see, but can feel and know as being true. Santa Claus is a symbol of the meaning of Christmas. His name comes from the source of Christmas, a man that gave freely and represents the best that there is in mankind. He allows us to offer gifts without expectation of recognition or thanks. He allows us the joy of giving in secret. Just as we know the feeling from the warmth of the sun or the wind on our face, Santa allows us to increase the kindness we show. And, through him, we are afforded a means to give a little more and take a little less.

If some critters could talk, I am sure they would tell you they also believe. They would be happy to tell you what their Santa is like. That the ones they know are kind, generous, benevolent, and gentle. That these Santas give without expectation, recognition, or reciprocation. That some of the ones they know are the committed staff of the Tehama County Animal Care Center who, as they arrived, ensured that not only were they given shelter and food, but that they were also shown compassion and affection. And because of these very special Santas — Christine McClintock, Shawnee Winterson, Lisa Bramley, Hannah Hood, Marisela Mendoza and Kristopher Scott — they have a chance for a better life.

Another favorite Christmas movie is “The Muppet Christmas Carol.” In it, the personification of Santa, the Ghost of Christmas Present, sings one of my favorite songs, “It Feels Like Christmas.” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIRpGj7LWS4>). A portion of the lyrics are, “It is the season of the heart, A special time of caring, The ways of love made clear, And it is the season of the spirit, The message, if we hear it, Is make it last all year... It’s all the ways that we show love, That feel like Christmas... Yes, when you do your best for love, It feels like Christmas.” If you want to see “the ways of love made clear” and the “season of the spirit” then you need look no further for Santa representation than the devoted volunteers who dedicate hours of effort to make sure the animals at shelter have every opportunity to get a forever loving home. Their enthusiasm and unwavering commitment epitomizes what the best of humanity should be.

Through the diligence, generosity and teamwork of many, comfort, peace, and joy came to a vast number of the abandoned and abused this past year, who would not have otherwise had a promising future. These people are the embodiment of Santa all year long. They personify his qualities of benevolence and gentleness. They give their time and pieces of their hearts without expectation. Like the animals aided, you do not need to see someone dressed in a red suit to know that the magic of Christmas is real.

I will say it again, “Yes, I believe in Santa,” because of people like those mentioned above. They share themselves and give love where none has been before. They provide hope and the promise of better things to come. They offer unfailing compassion and kindness. You do not need to have a sleigh, a big red coat, or flying reindeer to be Santa. And we need not see someone sliding down the chimney to

understand the spirit of the season is real. Seeing isn't believing. Believing is seeing. For me, it has never been hard to continue to believe in Santa. Merry Christmas.

Ronnie Casey has been volunteering with the Tehama County Animal Care Center since relocating in 2011. A retired R.N., she strives to help animals in need within Tehama county. She can be reached at rmcredbluff@gmail.com.

The best present for a homeless animal this season



Burger is a volunteer favorite because he is a complete joy to be around. He is about 5 years old and is just a loveable, affectionate good boy. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: December 11, 2020 at 2:40 p.m. | UPDATED: December 11, 2020 at 2:40 p.m.

To have a Home for the Holidays is a wish many would like to come true. However this year, for both people and animals, the holidays will be a heartbreaking occasion, especially when we realize that the state of California has the highest homeless population in the U.S. as of this writing.

Homelessness is not just a problem of substance abusers, the physically handicapped or people with mental illness. It can happen to anyone, including pets. To put things in perspective, I was once a breath away from being homeless. What prevented me from becoming a statistic was the support of those who believed in me. They gave me a reason to live and go on by providing hope where there was none.

One of the definitions of hope is "to believe that events will turn out for the best." Everyone needs to have hope, including homeless animals, and for those of us more

fortunate, it is up to us deliver it. For those facing homelessness, that hope becomes a beacon in a dark world.

First, we must understand what homelessness is. It means not having a home. Homelessness affects a wide variety of groups. Some groups, whether people or animals, are more likely to become homeless because they have fewer rights, unmet needs, and are less able to cope by themselves.

Animal homelessness is a huge issue faced by the community we live in, and by those concerned about animal welfare. Each day pets end up at the shelter, the majority of which are homeless. Both homeless animals and homeless people share commonality. Each spends all day looking for a meal, a safe, dry, quiet, warm location to rest weary bones without being shooed away, to get needed sleep. Opportunities become elusive.

Nobody wants either group around. Each loses their base, a foundation from which to function. It becomes hard to focus. Constant obstacles chip away at a healthy personality, causing it to wither and disintegrate. Both person and animal become scared, frustrated, angry, and distrustful. Each is overwhelmed. Frequently attributed to human homelessness is a lack of housing, mental health issues, poverty, and abuse.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) names three elements to the problem of animal homelessness: economic issues, behavioral issues, and housing concerns. Again, there is more similarity than difference. For both, the picture becomes a grim reality.

Looking at the current economic issues due to shut-downs and resultant lay-offs, the cliché “money makes the world go ‘round” could not be truer when it comes to the homelessness of pets. Living is expensive for humans and pets alike, from healthcare to food. Adding a pet to a home, just like a child, requires medical care, food, supplies, and other unanticipated expenditures. If it is a choice between human or animal to be put on the street, the animal will be the first choice.

Behavioral issues, in humans known as their “mental health”, are also a major factor to the homeless pet population. When pets act up, some owners cannot cope, not understanding the animals’ inherent behavior and their training needs. These pets often find themselves being abandoned, or voluntarily surrendered. As in human mental health, there can be underlying issues which simply present as bad behavior. Some may stem from a history of abuse, neglect, or trauma. Again, the animal is discarded.

Housing is another component to homelessness. Many rental properties have restrictions on pets. To make a horrible matter more complex, the shelter can only house so many animals at a time. There are those pet-loving families that must make a difficult choice about their pet when relocating. While choosing to surrender a pet because of housing restrictions may seem unconscionable to some, it is imperative that we realize that in today’s economic climate individuals may not have the resources to keep a pet forever. This is the sad reality of the increasing homeless human and pet population.

So what can we, as individuals, do if we care about homeless pets, but we find ourselves in a situation where we cannot provide a forever home? First, consider fostering animals which need homes during the interim while they are awaiting a permanent family. Secondly, volunteer to help socialize the animals and identify issues which might impact future foster or adoption placement. Running a shelter or rescue is hard work, ask anyone involved. Many hands and talents are needed to keep pets out of the system. Ultimately, anyone with a passion can contribute to help homeless pets. Donations of time, money, and effort all contribute to aid these hugely disadvantaged animals.

We realize the dream of a home will not come true for some animals this December. For those left behind, a little kindness from you can warm their cold, dismal days. And even though there may not seem to be enough hours or money to achieve everything wanted during this holiday season, let alone assist a shelter animal, please realize that just doing one small thing, no matter how insignificant it may seem, makes a huge difference in the desolate lives of these homeless critters. If you want to know the what the biggest present you can give to a homeless animal this season is, it is a home.

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Animals contributed to the WW II effort



Teddy, is a terrier mix, is about 4 years old. He got to go on a hike last week and did great in the car and was the perfect companion on his adventure. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: December 4, 2020 at 3:03 p.m. | UPDATED: December 4, 2020 at 3:04 p.m.

Last year I wrote a bit about World War II and the animals that contributed to the war effort. In a few short days we will again observe what President Franklin Delano Roosevelt called, “a date which will live in infamy.” And, though it may seem repetitive, I think it is important that we never forget such a defining moment in our nation’s history, the 1,076,245 U.S. casualties that resulted, or all those who played such pivotal roles during the conflict.

On Sunday, December 7, 1941, at 7:55 a.m., Japanese fighter planes zoomed in without warning and attacked Hawaii’s Pearl Harbor naval base on the island of Oahu. On that date, a total of 2,403 Americans died and 1,143 were wounded. The US Navy suffered a terrible blow to its Pacific Fleet. Almost half of the total casualties (1,177) occurred when the USS Arizona sank. However, other U.S. Army, Navy, Army Air Force, and Marine Corps facilities across the length and breadth of Oahu also incurred incredible death and destruction. The attack galvanized the nation’s support for involvement in the war and, on December 8th, the United States entered the Second World War, which has been determined the deadliest military conflict in history.

During acts of war armies often enlisted the aid of non-humans. In past conflicts horses, elephants, and camels, to name a few, hauled supplies; pigeons delivered messages; and dogs tracked enemies. These efforts not only helped many soldiers, but also changed the course of numerous battles. World War II was no different. Military forces employed thousands of animals during the horrendous six-year conflict. In addition to the previously named animals oxen, cows, reindeer, mice, bats, even the lowly spider were drafted into the military of both the allies and axis powers. From the last mounted cavalry charge of the U.S. Army to the over 36,000 homing pigeons deployed overseas, animals had a significant impact on military operations during the Second World War.

They were found in every theater of the war. Whether it was in the European Theatre, the Mediterranean, African and Middle-East Theatre or the Pacific Theatre, their heroism, hard work, and innate skills aided the military. They were the soldiers’ comrades-in-arms and companions as they entered battles, fighting alongside to protect, transport, communicate, and sustain morale.

Approximately twenty thousand dogs served the U.S. Army, Coast Guard, and Marine Corps., many of which were donated by this country’s citizens. The U.S. Marine Corps used the dogs in the Pacific theater to help take islands back from Japanese occupying forces. During the 1944 liberation of Guam, in addition to the U.S. soldiers who gave their lives for it to occur, 25 canines from the 2nd and 3rd War Dog platoons made the ultimate sacrifice, forever immortalized by the Guam War Dog Memorial. The Coast Guard used almost 2,000 dogs and handlers to cover the Eastern and Western coasts of the U.S., to protect against spies and saboteurs entering the country by submarine.

Although the Second World War is thought of as the first all-mechanized war, horse units were widely used by the armies of almost all the nations. The last remaining US cavalry regiment to serve was the 26th Cavalry (Philippine Scouts) on Corregidor. Its 250 horses and 48 baggage mules met their end on March 15th, 1942, not in any battle, but slaughtered for food for the then starving U.S. and Philippine army. During

the war, the Germans used over two and a half million horses and mules, and the Red Army almost three million.

However, pack mules had a greater value than horses due to their ability to negotiate rugged terrain inaccessible to vehicles and horses. This fact was proven in the mountains of Italy, Greece, the Balkans and the dense island jungles and high mountains of the Pacific. By the fourth year of the war there were almost 10,000 mules in the U.S. Army.

The Army Signal Corps had over 3,000 soldiers and 150 officers assigned to the U.S. Military Pigeon Service, to care for over 54,000 military pigeons. The pigeons were used in every combat theater, and saw service with ground troops, on submarines, in bombers and within the intelligence service. Countless soldiers owed their lives to these flying warriors. G.I. Joe Pigeon, USA43SC6390, was the most famous American pigeon of the war, and was awarded the PDSA Dickin medal in August 1946. The citation reads: "This bird is credited with making the most outstanding flight by a USA Army Pigeon in World War II."

World War II had many who served, yet not all were human. During this Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, let us also remember the unflinching loyalty and unbelievable courage of those non-human soldiers. For those that are interested in learning more about the animals that served, I would like to suggest the following: "Loyal Forces: The American Animals of World War II" by Toni M. Kiser and Lindsey F. Barnes; "Buddies: Heartwarming Photos of GIs and Their Dogs in World War II" by L. Douglas Keeney; "War Animals: The Unsung Heroes of World War II" by Robin Hutton; and "Always Faithful: A Memoir of the Marine Dogs of WWII" by William W. Putney.

Love has no age limit when adopting a pet



Wanda is about 8 years old, spayed and litter box trained. Her eye had been surgically removed prior to coming to the shelter, but that doesn't stop her from being the friendliest cat around. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

November is Adopt a Senior Pet month and, even though this is the last weekend of the month, there is no reason not to consider adopting a senior anytime during the rest of the year. Disturbingly, out of the millions of animals taken to shelters each year, senior relinquishment has become a more prevalent occurrence. Sadly, just like the older individuals who talk of feeling abandoned and frightened when displaced to a nursing home, it is not difficult to imagine that senior pets experience the same despondency and fear when they lose the only home they have ever known.

Unfortunately, senior pets often end up in shelters for a variety of reasons, most of which are not their fault. Some reasons are the same as any other animal, such as neglect, abandonment, or straying. Unfortunately for some, their previous owners may have died without providing instruction regarding what was to happen to their beloved pet in the event of their demise. Others may have moved to assisted living or an area where they are no longer able to provide proper care for their pet. Family members may not be available, may themselves not be able to care for the animal, or simply do not want to take on the additional responsibilities. Whatever the reason, the health of older animals is at higher risk in a shelter environment. They usually do not adapt well, and frequently will decline rapidly.

In addition, older animals, due to public perception, are often more difficult to adopt. Perhaps it is because adopters feel adopting a senior pet will only lead to heartbreak. But we never truly know how much time we have with any animal or, for that matter, with anyone that is important to us. Nothing in this life is ever guaranteed, as we have well learned this year. However, as surprisingly as it may appear, we have heard numerous times that seniors who were adopted not only thrived, but also exceeded their expected lifespan once safely placed, again, in a loving home environment.

The common thought is that cats and dogs become senior around seven years old. But like humans, senior pets can and often do, defy the adage of “old and decrepit”. While a bit a little slower in some areas, they still have a lot to offer, among which is experience and the sweetness of maturity. And like the rest of us, given a nutritious diet, enough exercise, and regular check-ups there is no reason why an elderly pet cannot enjoy a good quality of life for many years.

Something to consider when adopting is that with older pets, what you see is what you get. Whether they max out at 70 or 10 pounds, or are stubby or lanky, senior pets have already developed into exactly who they are going to be. Not only have they have reached their full-grown size, but their personality has already developed. Thus, it is easier to see if the animal will be a perfect fit for you and your family.

They are more independent. While senior pets still love being close, they can amuse themselves and not make the same demands for your attention as younger animals. They no longer need the constant training and care puppies and kittens require. Puppies and kittens are notorious for getting into trouble. Chewing, scratching, and other unwanted behaviors have decimated untold amounts of furniture and articles of clothing in many households. Seniors, conversely, have learned what appropriate conduct is and do not need the constant monitoring and reinforcement that pups and kitties do.

Whoever said, “You can’t teach an old dog (or cat) new tricks”, obviously never had an adult pet. Youths, in whatever venue, typically have shorter attention spans and less impulse control than their more mature equivalents. Older animals, as a rule, will focus more readily and with better comprehension on the job at hand. Another positive factor is that senior dogs and cats are most likely already potty-trained, thus preventing frustration and oodles of extra cleaning.

They also make excellent companions for seniors. An older pet can have a lot of energy, but tends not to be as inconsistent in its behavior as a younger version. They are definitely “more chill”. Something to consider, obtaining either a puppy or kitten can mean many years of responsibility that an older person may not have. However, to those seniors I strongly suggest considering a pet who is also in his or her golden years. Having the companionship of a faithful friend and providing a loving home to an elderly pet can definitely be a win-win for all concerned.

When you open your heart and home to a senior pet, you let them know that they are worthy of love and comfort during their twilight years. In return, no matter who you are or where you live, the rest of the pet’s life will be spent thanking you for their second chance at happiness. For additional information regarding senior pets, “My Old Dog: Rescued Pets with Remarkable Second Acts” book by Laura T. Coffey is a good read and includes a valuable resource guide also available online (<http://www.myolddogbook.com/?p=3791>). The Senior Dogs Project (<http://srdogs.com/>) has excellent resources too.

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Celebrate with Random Acts of Kindness Friday



Cheese Box came into the shelter when her elderly owners could no longer stay in their home. She is 5-6 years old, spayed, litter box trained and has been an inside only girl as you can see from her soft and luxurious coat. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: November 20, 2020 at 2:05 p.m. | UPDATED: November 20, 2020 at 2:06 p.m.

As all of us are aware, this year has not been “normal” in many respects. Over these last few months I am sure that you, like me, have seen more bitter, mudslinging coarseness and cruelty than I had ever hoped to see from people from whom I expected better. And, despite the lip-service given to curb hate speech, eradicate bullying, and extend tolerance to our fellow man, a culture of nastiness has grown immeasurably, and common decency and civility is becoming the exception rather than the rule.

Personally, I am fed up and would like to see a kinder start to this holiday season, with the hope that it might extend into the coming year. Four years ago, a movement was started called “RAK (Random Acts of Kindness) Friday” as a way to transform the commercialism of “Black Friday” by committing as many random acts of kindness as possible. So I ask, what harm could there be in celebrating #RAKFriday, and ring in the holidays like they were meant to be?

The phrase “Random Acts of Kindness” (RAK) is well known. A “Random Act of Kindness” is simply doing something nice for someone else, without them having to ask and it is done without the expectation of receiving something in return, which includes a “thank you” or some other form of recognition. It is an action that is selfless, or a mindset that puts compassion for others before one’s own interests. It has been proven that when one person commits a random act of kindness for another, it not only positively affects both the giver and the receiver, but it also impacts anyone who witnesses the act. As Mark Twain stated, “Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.”

During these unsettling times, the news abounds with suggestions for dealing with feelings of depression resultant from the imposed isolation. Something to consider, whether you are the recipient, giver, or witness to an act of kindness, is that you can experience the benefit of an increase in oxytocin, a natural hormone. Oxytocin helps to lower blood pressure, improve overall health, and increase feelings of self-worth and optimism. And if that was not enough, kindness to animals has its own set of tangible rewards. Every purr or tail-wag somehow makes life a little brighter. And, of course, every life helped brings even larger, immeasurable rewards.

“Random Acts of Kindness by Animals”, by Stephanie LaLand, documents stories of acts of kindness performed by various animals. The book not only highlights ways that they practice compassion among their own and other species, but it also integrates instances of human compassion for animals. However, the biggest take-away is that, if those considered not as intelligent as us advanced humans can be kind and compassionate, there is absolutely no excuse that prevents us from being the same.

Whether you donate monetarily, a little or a lot...whether you volunteer one or 1000 hours...whether you adopt one pet or foster a hundred...whatever it is you do, no act of kindness is considered trivial. If you are wondering what can be done, here are some suggestions: Take an elderly neighbor’s dog for a walk or to the vet if

necessary; gather coupons for pet food and share them with those who might be financially stressed or, better still, give them some pet food; donate supplies to our animal shelter; foster an animal until it can be placed in a loving home; volunteer to muck out stalls, socialize, groom and feed animals for those that might need an extra hand; help cover pet medical expenses for those struggling; and, most of all, remember to smile, give a compliment, and thank someone. It costs nothing and you just might make someone's day.

While you are at it, why not consider "adopting" an animal shelter, rescue, animal control unit or vet clinic. This may not help an animal specifically, but it is an indirect way to show kindness to animals by helping those in the trenches avoid compassion fatigue. These people have tough jobs, and they are on the front lines helping animals in difficult and often emotionally gut-wrenching situations. Showing gratitude and doing a random act of kindness can give them a little boost of happiness in what might be an extremely difficult day. Dropping off a box of donuts, or providing a lunch, or offering some sort of freebie service can provide an immeasurable boost.

If we hope to shape attitudes toward different animal, cultural, and human rights issues, then we need to nurture in our children the value of kindness toward one another, animals, and our environment. While it is easy to believe that children will naturally be kind to animals without having to be taught, it is not necessarily true. Some do not have an instinct for being gentle, and as we have especially seen this year, not all have had good examples from which to learn. As we look to the future for all of us, we need to integrate the qualities of compassion, tolerance, and integrity into our lives. #RAK Friday is a golden opportunity for us to do this.

It does not take much to help change the world for the better. Begin the change with a small act of kindness.

National Dog Show set for Thanksgiving Day



Butter is a sweet, senior border collie and Labrador mix who is dog friendly, housebroken and pretty good on a leash. She loves people, but will always prefer men as it was just her and her dad for years. Call 527-3439, to meet her. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: November 13, 2020 at 11:12 a.m. | UPDATED: November 13, 2020 at 11:29 a.m.

The National Dog Show, presented by Purina, is one of the most well known dog shows in the world and, despite this being a most difficult year, it will still will be broadcast nationally from noon-2 p.m. in all time zones following the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

The show, being hosted by The Kennel Club of Philadelphia (<https://nds.nationaldogshow.com/>), has been a beloved holiday tradition for families across the nation since it was first broadcast in 2002. Even though we may not have had the Charlie Brown "Great Pumpkin," at least some traditions are still happening. Unfortunately, this year's competition will be limited to 600 dogs, which is a 70% decrease from the nearly 2,000 who have competed previously.

The Kennel Club of Philadelphia Dog Shows are sanctioned by the American Kennel Club (<https://www.akc.org/>), the principal registry for purebred dogs in the United States and the largest registry in the world. In the first round of the Show, dogs of the same breed will compete against each other based on how the dog fits the breed's standards. The winner, named "Best in Breed," will represent their breed at the next level: the group. The American Kennel Club categorizes every breed into one of seven groups. At the group level dogs are not judged against each other, but rather against how well they fit their breed's group standards. Each group winner, named "First in Breed," will go on to compete in the final round for the coveted Best in Show. While speaking of "Best in Show," I would recommend that as a little light-hearted pre-

show humor, you might consider watching the American mockumentary comedy film of the same name.

Each of the more than 205 AKC registered breeds are assigned to one of seven groups representing characteristics and functions for which the breeds were originally bred. Those groups are the Terrier Group, the Toy Group, the Working Group, the "Sporting Group, the Hound Group, the Herding Group and the Non-Sporting Group.

The Terrier Group, except for two of the terriers, evolved in the British Isles. The geography of the area helped determine the breed's duties, which usually involved hunting vermin and varmints. These are dogs of great determination and self-confidence, with a huge willingness to go to ground in search of quarry.

The Toy Group was bred for one purpose: to be companions for their humans. Their small size and portability make them ideal for city dwellers and those with limited space.

The Working Group is powerfully built and intelligent, often guarding homes and livestock, and serving as police, military, security, guide, and service dogs.

The Sporting Group aids in hunting game birds. While a number of the breeds perform more than one task, it is generally the duty of pointers and setters to point and mark game; for spaniels to flush game; and for retrievers to recover dead and wounded game.

The Hound Group was mostly developed to hunt independently for their humans, who usually follow as the hounds chase down prey. This group consists of scent hounds that hunt by tracking a scent, and sight hounds who spot their game and run it down.

The Herding Group is comprised of dogs whose sole purpose is gathering and moving livestock from one place to another. Until 1983, the breeds in the Herding Group were part of the Working Group.

And lastly there is the Non-Sporting Group, which is literally every breed that is left, resulting in a wide variety of sizes, shapes, hair, function, and history.

This year, three breeds will make their debut at the National Dog Show. The Barbet, which will compete in the Sporting Group, served for centuries as a water retriever for royalty and commoner alike, with his thick, waterproof coat earning him the reputation of braving the chilliest water. In addition to his retrieving skills, he is also cherished for his versatility and joyful, intelligent personality.

Strong and agile, the Belgian Laekenois (pronounced "Lak-in-wah") joins the Herding Group and is one of four native dogs of Belgium. This breed was originally raised to guard livestock and linens drying outside before serving as messenger dogs during WWI and WWII.

And lastly, my personal favorite, the relatively newish breed, the Dogo Argentino, who will be competing in the Working Group. This breed was originally a pack-hunting dog in Argentina, known to take down wild boar and puma, among other large game.

A word of caution, these three breeds are large dogs known for being extremely intelligent and strong willed, therefore are not recommended for novice dog-owners.

Also, I would like to provide a bit of upcoming pet community information. Tehama Together, a non-profit organization which spearheads community projects to enrich the lives of the inhabitants of Tehama County has, among its many offerings, put together an Emergency Preparedness Program, which takes into consideration families with animals.

Organizers will be offering information to help prepare families and their animals for emergencies; assistance with registering for Tehama Alert; and, to attendees, family and pet go bags, emergency checklists, document holders, window clings and battery operated radios.

Events are scheduled for 10:30 a.m., 11 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Nov. 18 and Dec. 1 and 5:30 p.m. Nov. 19 and Dec. 2 at the Westside Grange Hall, 20794 Walnut St., Red Bluff. For more information, call 527-2223 or write to TehamaTogether@gmail.com.

Ronnie Casey has been volunteering with the Tehama County Animal Care Center since relocating in 2011. A retired R.N., she strives to help animals in need within Tehama county. She can be reached at rmcredbluff@gmail.com.

Animal care center is there when you need it



Sgt. Stubby was found as a stray and has quickly stolen everyone's hearts. He is incredibly affectionate and mellow. If interested, call 527-3439. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: October 30, 2020 at 10:06 a.m. | UPDATED: October 30, 2020 at 10:06 a.m.

Human nature tends to appreciate people or things much more when they are needed, and not readily available. Like when we complain about the cost of insurance until we need to file a claim for a home or business that has burned to the ground.

Like when we criticize law enforcement until we are personally threatened and need their protection. Like when we disparage doctors and lawyers until we are in dire need of their expertise. Humans are nothing, if not consistent.

Chances are most people do not even think about their community animal shelter, until a personal need suddenly arises. Part of the reason is that many still envision the shelter as a dreary, dirty, sad place where animals are sent to be ignored and forgotten. They harken back to the "pound" of the 1950s, '60s, '70s, etc., and remember these places as little more than death row for unwanted dogs and cats.

While I am not privy to the thousands of shelters across the country, I can say with certainty that our community animal shelter is not a 'pound', nor is it a place of sadness. Rather it is a place of hope, a place of healing and redemption, and a place of compassion. This shelter is a center where people with a passion for the welfare of animals gather to work towards a better world for them and, in doing so, also create a better world for us. This small public shelter is not the poorly-lit, smelly, dingy grey prison envisioned. It is warm and inviting, and even with the many hurdles it must face, works diligently to ensure that it's special guests, the animals, are well taken care of.

The first week in November has been designated as National Animal Shelter Appreciation Week by the Humane Society of the United States. I would argue that we should appreciate our shelters and the people who work within them every week, but if that is not to be the case, why not at least do it this week? Bringing together homeless critters and loving homes is one of the things that our local shelter does best, but it is by no means the only thing. From taking in these wayward animals and giving them food, water, and shelter, to rescuing injured or abused animals, and to reuniting lost pets with their families, our local animal shelter spends 365 days a year saving lives. The shelter I am talking about is the Tehama County Animal Care Center, located at 1830 Walnut St., Red Bluff, 527-3439.

I also ask that you reflect upon the fact that the staff takes care of approximately 100 - 140 animals on any given day, every single day throughout the year. Each day these staff members are called upon to be mentally, emotionally, and physically able to deal with a variety of complex situations with both animals and the general public while having limited resources, support, and certainly no accolades. These are good people doing tough work and making hard decisions. I know because I have worked alongside these amazing individuals. As a result, I have great admiration and respect for the staff of our Animal Care Center. It is important for their community to recognize the effort they put in, their knowledge and expertise, and their life-saving commitment to the animals. Would it be so hard to bake them some cookies or just send them a thank-you note for their efforts? A well-deserved pat on the back is more reward than they typically receive.

While you are dropping off goodies, why not fill out a volunteer form? Animal shelters can always use more volunteers, and ours is no exception. Maybe you could volunteer to play with the animals and show them the affection that may have been sorely lacking in their previous life. Perhaps dogs need to be walked or towels need to be washed. Simply ask what needs to be done, and I am sure there will be something for you to do.

Speaking of volunteering, why not become a foster? If you are able to foster an animal or two on a temporary basis, please seriously consider it. You will not just be providing a loving place for a dog or cat in need, you will also be making more room for new animals to have a safe-haven at the shelter.

Donations of cash, supplies, and equipment are always needed, and more than welcomed. The best way to make sure that you are fulfilling a real need is to contact the Center and ask what is required immediately. Speaking on a personal level, they have had a number of animals with medical needs that the county budget does not meet. However, they do have a “medical donation” fund which assists in covering the extra costs. If you are in the position to make a cash donation to this fund, I know it would be greatly appreciated by both the shelter and the animals helped. If you are looking for another way to contribute, the Care Center has published a “wish list” of items they could use, on their website (<https://www.co.tehama.ca.us/how-you-can-help/animal-care-donate>), please check it out.

Finally, ask your friends, family, co-workers and neighbors to assist you in applauding the unsung heroes who help make a difference in the lives of so many homeless animals in Tehama County.

Time to celebrate National Fetch Day



Forest's favorite part of a day is snuggling with his handlers, just barely beating out yummy Puppuccinos. Forest does great in cars, walks well on his halter, sits and recalls. Forest's language is love and treats, so he aims to please, which will be perfect for teaching him the ropes. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: October 16, 2020 at 3:43 p.m. | UPDATED: October 16, 2020 at 4:56 p.m.

I cannot imagine not sharing my life with a dog, and we know there are a lot of ways to bond with our fuzzy friends. Of course, those ways depend on both our interests and the dogs'. However, chances are that you have played at least a few games of

fetch with him. As a matter of fact, playing fetch is such a great way to bond with dogs that a whole day has been set aside to bring attention to this fun game.

On October 20, 2018 the 20th anniversary of the hugely popular Chuckit! Launcher, the company Petmate founded “National Fetch Day” to celebrate that human-animal bond, and as an opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of exercise for pets. According to the company, “It’s a day to get outside and Make Fetch Happen.” The event has been kicked-off the third Saturday of October with challenges and events each year since inception (<https://www.petmate.com/NationalFetchDay>), and today is the day.

Unfortunately, in our household “fetching” is not something that holds any appeal for our critters and, needless to say, they could use the extra exercise. Perhaps saying that it holds no appeal is incorrect. One dog watches the ball being thrown and the other loves to run after it, but promptly brings the ball back to wherever she was lying, thus ending the entire “fetch” game.

It is estimated that 55.8% of dogs in the U.S. are classified as overweight or obese, according to the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (<https://petobesityprevention.org/>). That is truly a staggering number.

Sadly, that extra weight can cause the same types of problems seen in humans. The primary risks of excess weight in dogs are osteoarthritis, insulin resistance and Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart and respiratory disease, cruciate ligament injury, kidney disease, various forms of cancer and a decreased life expectancy.

On the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention website (<http://www.petobesityprevention.org/pet-weight-translator/>) you can use their weight equivalent charts to determine how much your pet weighs compared to an average adult male or female human. For those of us that have an overweight animal, it can be quite enlightening. In addition, a few simple tests can help determine if your dog has a weight problem. The first should be that the pet’s ribs can be felt without pressing down. The pet should have a waist, the area between the back of the ribs and the hips, when looking at your pet from above. Also, when looking at your pet from the side, the belly should go up from the bottom of the ribcage to the inside of the thighs.

Getting your pet to lose weight is to employ calorie restriction and be sure he has daily exercise. Owners may often feel their pet does not eat much and are concerned they will go hungry. The result is that they either provide an overabundance of treats and food, or ‘people foods’ that are not in the pet’s best interest. Dog food should meet all of the pet’s dietary needs, without having to add additional table scraps. Ingesting fewer calories is a good first step to pet weight loss, and your veterinarian can help with recommendations on how to accomplish it.

The next important step to help your dog maintain a healthy weight is to make exercise a regular part of his routine. Physical activity is more than simply a chance for you and your dog to have fun and increase the bond between the both of you. Playing fetch is one way to get your dog moving, unless he happens to be like our canine. It allows him to run to his heart’s content without wearing you out in the process. As long as your throwing arm holds up, it’s easy to play together for at least ten to fifteen minutes twice a day.

Also, healthy dogs are energetic and, unless they have constructive outlets for pent-up energy, bad behaviors can ensue. If the animal is bored and has nothing else to do, be prepared for the possibility of destructive chewing, barking for no reason, or him being uncontrollable and uncooperative. Playing fetch with Fido helps to give him something positive to do instead. Just as we need physical and mental stimulation to function well, so do our dogs. Not only does a game of fetch improve physical health, the interactive playtime can be used as an opportunity to train and teach those good behavior skills to Fido.

However, it is always important to watch for any unusual physical signs or difficulty breathing. Just like you, every dog's exercise needs are different and there is no single right answer. Factors to consider are your dog's size, breed, age, general health, and the environment. The best bet is to watch your dog while walking and if he begins to pant and slow down, he has probably done enough. In addition, if moderate exercise seems to take its toll, it might be wise to schedule a vet appointment to make sure there are no undiagnosed medical problems.

No matter what, if you do "MakeFetchHappen," it should be fun for everyone.

Making a difference by fostering



Maureen, a domestic short hair kitten, is known for her sweet yet sassy attitude. Her favorite pastimes include playing with enthusiasm, snuggling and showing off for belly rubs. She doesn't mind being a singleton, but she liked to play with her siblings, so probably wouldn't mind having another feline friend. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) | PUBLISHED: October 9, 2020 at 3:52 p.m. | UPDATED: October 9, 2020 at 5:56 p.m.

This year has been one hell of a year thus far. Between the pandemic, fires and divisions escalating between us over social, political, and environmental issues, it is a wonder that any of us have a modicum of sanity left. Each day seems to compound emotionally exhaustive feelings, with no tangible end in sight. The loss of normalcy seems to exacerbate the stress and anxiety felt. I cannot speak for anyone else, but

the act of fostering through these tumultuous times has been extremely pivotal in aiding me to cope with life around me.

I have a tendency to forget that not everyone feels the way I, and others, do about animals, but I am going to ask you not to roll your eyes. While I try to explain what my personal experience has been like, in the hope that you will join me and some other fosters in not only saving lives, but learning that the world does not have to be a dark and stormy place. I have always prided myself on being self-sufficient, but the hard truth is that I am not. No one is. Not really. Mutual care is the only way we survive as individuals and as a society. By offering our homes to vulnerable animals, we can provide that care to both them and ourselves.

There is an adage of “Whoever saves a life saves the world entire,” attributed to both the Talmud and movie “Schindler’s List.” There are also many allegories regarding a world in flames with one person compelled to save just one soul in peril. Too many sentient homeless animals capable of a gamut of feelings are left fighting for survival, and I genuinely believe that if we cannot take care of those most vulnerable, then as humanity we fail miserably. By exposing my heart and opening my home for a brief moment in time for a tiny being whose entire future depended on surviving for a few weeks, that moment made all the difference. It may not have saved the world, but it saved that animal’s world and, in the process, it improved mine.

The amount of laughter, joy, and happiness felt while fostering is unlike anything previously experienced. Seeing baby kittens who can barely focus their eyes become flying little imps is worthy of its weight in kitten poop. Having these precious infants fall asleep in my hand is like holding a ray of sunshine on a dark, desolate day. It felt like there was hope for the future and life was not as bleak as it lately appears.

I learned a great deal from the little ones. They taught me as much, if not more, than I imparted to them. They showed me that the most important things in life are quite simple. Give them a warm, comfortable place to sleep, loving companionship, clean water, and fresh food and they are happy and satisfied with life. They taught me to be flexible and prepared for the unforeseen. Taking care of an animal in need helps you realize that we can all fall prey to ugly circumstances that are not in our control. But just like their situations can improve through some help, so can ours.

Most of all, though, I learned that changing a discarded life only takes a bit of caring and time.

I learned what I can be capable of. While in the moment, you do not think about how life-saving your actions are. You do not wake up thinking “I’m going to save a life today.” It is just something you do, because you know that you have to do something, anything to help. Like a lot of people, I had all the good reasons to say no to being a foster. No, I do not have the time. No, I do not want to get attached to an animal I cannot keep. No, I do not have the space. No, I do not have the experience. But I said yes, instead. Yes, to helping an animal in need. Yes, to not letting my fears and doubts get in the way of making a difference. Yes, to opening up a kennel at the shelter so they could save another animal. And the last yes is, it is okay to love something and let it go. As hard as it is to do, I also learned to accept that I did all I could, because in the end, I couldn’t give the animal(s) everything they needed, which was a place to call their forever home.

With fostering, there are surprises that can be present every step of the way, but by being willing to embrace all that it has to offer (and there is much), I found that fostering touches the heart in a way that is hard to come by elsewhere. You help the weak become strong and the tragic become triumphant. You build the bridge between homeless and home. You stop saying “I wish someone would do something”, and realize you are that someone. You learn a lot about yourself through the process. At least I did.

Think about it, and if you would like to learn more about fostering, please contact Christine McClintock, Manager at 527-3439 at the Tehama County Animal Care Center.

Make a difference by providing a voice for the voiceless



Bonnie and Clyde are a senior bonded pair who love being together. Bonnie is more reserved and enjoys time being in laps, while Clyde loves to chase a tennis ball. Because they are so attached to each other, they need to be adopted together. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: October 2, 2020 at 2:07 p.m. | UPDATED: October 2, 2020 at 2:08 p.m.

Whether you are a Democrat, Republican, or Independent voter, there is no denying that this is an election year, and everyone is competing for that precious vote. It makes it a perfect time to advocate for the animals we want to help. Former professional ice hockey player Wayne Gretzky is quoted as saying “You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take.” If you do nothing, you will not change the laws and policies for the betterment of anyone or anything, and that includes the animals. So, if you truly want to make a difference by providing a voice for the voiceless, now is an opportune time to do it.

Legislators want to keep their jobs, which means they really want to hear from those who can determine whether or not they stay in office. Who is that person? It is you, the voter. Look at it this way, an unbelievable amount of communication flows through any representative's office daily. In order to prioritize, communications are sorted by their perceived value. Chances are your elected official's staff will cross-reference your information with district voting records to see if you are a voter, and active voters definitely have more clout than someone who has no record of having previously voted. Therefore, first things first. In order to be heard, you must register to vote, and then actually get up off your rump and cast your ballot. If you want more information with regard to the upcoming elections, contact The Tehama County Elections Department located at 633 Washington Street – Room 17, Red Bluff, (527-8190 or elections@co.tehama.ca.us) In addition, their website (<https://www.co.tehama.ca.us/dep-elections>) provides a number of useful links for election information.

Whether they are local city managers, Tehama County district supervisors, California state representatives or U.S. Senators, our elected officials care (or perhaps and more appropriately, they should care) what their voters think. It is our job to let them know. By sending letters and e-mails supporting pro-animal measures that are already on the legislative agenda, you can help convince politicians that the voters who put them in office want to see animals protected. In addition, if there are no pro-animal items on the agenda, you can actively work to change that status. But first, before contacting any elected representative about any improvement in animal welfare, you must take the time to educate yourself about the issue you wish to address so that you come across as both credible and knowledgeable. Do your research. Some helpful sites are; the Animal Law Resource Center (<http://www.animallaw.com/index.cfm>), the Humane Society Legislative Fund (<https://hslf.org/blog>), and the Animal Legal Defense Fund (<https://aldf.org/article/working-with-legislators/>).

When addressing issues such as: increasing budgetary allotments and staffing in order to facilitate the local animal shelter and the sheriff's animal control division effectively meeting the increased needs of the community and its animal population; instituting TNR programs; changes in the ordinances regarding animal cruelty and neglect prosecution; regulating abandoned, free-roaming and feral cats; etc., it is important to keep in mind that there are a number of factors that weigh upon the elected official's decision-making process. Among those are: the impact it will have on his/her district, the economic impact on overall budget, general public sentiment, the possible personal impact on the representative and his family, the position of the representative's political party, and the possibility of garnering either positive or negative media attention. However, it is always important to remember that elected officials (and those running for office) are, first and foremost, politicians that either want to retain their existing position, or to replace who is already in the coveted position.

In addition, be sure to get a feel for the legislative process. For example, if you are contemplating a county-wide ordinance, contact the Tehama County Board of Supervisors at 727 Oak Street, Red Bluff, 527-4655 for information on enacting legislation. Verse yourself on existing ordinances, which can be found at Tehama County Code of Ordinances

(https://library.municode.com/ca/tehama_county/codes/code_of_ordinances). Then attend a Board of Supervisors meeting to become familiar with how they function. In Tehama County the Supervisors are at present: District 1, Steve Chamblin (Ext. 3015); District 2, Candy Carlson (Ext. 3014); District 3, Dennis Garton (Ext. 3017); District 4, Bob Williams (Ext. 3018); and District 5, Burt Bundy (Ext. 3016).

Elected officials, and those vying for office, take notice of public opinion, so letters to the editor are another powerful way to make your voice for animals heard and to garner more interest within the community. Even though it may not seem like a big deal by adding your name to a petition or sharing with your social networks, understand that your voice and subsequent actions count. If just one other person follows your lead, it may cause a domino effect with more people acting in the best interest of animals. Also, locate other voting advocates in each District and ask them to contact their Supervisor. Ask voting friends, family members, and co-workers to write polite letters to their representatives that demonstrate support for any proposed legislation. Personal letters, sent through the postal service, that use the sender's own words, rather than form letters, postcards or e-mails, will be taken more seriously.

By everyone working together, a forceful voice can be created for the animals we care about. If we wish to affect a change in the status quo, it is up to us to make that voice clearly heard. What better time is there to do it than now?

October is Adopt a Shelter Dog Month



Marley is about 3 years old and heartworm negative. He does great with other dogs and would do good in a home with kids since he has a playful personality. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: September 25, 2020 at 1:45 p.m. | UPDATED: September 25, 2020 at 1:49 p.m.

As the end of September approaches, many of us are beginning to get ready for the forthcoming holidays and look forward, eagerly, to upcoming festivities and more enjoyable times. Each year across the United States, an estimated 3-4 million dogs wait in shelters for someone to give them a safe haven where they, too, can experience more enjoyable times. Unfortunately, less than half will ever find someone to adopt them. Because of this appalling fact, both The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and the American Humane Association (AHA) have deemed the coming month of October as Adopt a Shelter Dog Month and Adopt a Dog Month, respectively. The terms, though slightly different, have the same ultimate goal. Both are about getting as many dogs as possible out of shelters and into the loving homes they truly deserve.

However, for many of these shelter dogs obtaining that good life is not easy as many of us would like. The hurdles they face are sometimes quite daunting simply because they must overcome the public's misconception that something is wrong with them. Understand, most are at shelters through no fault of their own. They are only there because their human guardians failed them in some manner. They are there because they are victims of situations over which they have absolutely no control.

Unfortunately for the animals that end up at the shelter, it is often because their guardians' expectations and the reality of the dog they obtained did not agree. The reasons they become wards of the county are as innumerable as the types, sizes, and colors of the animals, themselves. The shelter is filled with dogs that have relatively minor behavioral issues, most of which could have been easily prevented through a bit of forethought, some training, and patience. Other explanations often given for surrendering to a shelter are, "We do not have enough time", "It's too expensive", "We are moving, having a baby, changing jobs, etc.", all of which are the human's foibles and not the animals'. And sometimes, it is that their guardian simply could not physically care for them any longer, because of age or infirmity.

Regardless of the reason understand, when you adopt, that many of these dogs most likely have been through hell. In addition, they have had their previous world, whether good or bad, turned upside down. They are scared, confused, and stressed. They will not immediately comprehend that the new home you are bringing them into is the salvation that both they and we hope for. For some, a few days or weeks may be all the adjustment time they need. For others you may, throughout the rest of their lives, deal with a result from an earlier history. Our past plays a significant role in the way we think and feel. Why, then, would we even consider that an animal's past has no bearing on the way it perceives and responds to various circumstances.

However, every animal I have adopted, or have come in contact with at the shelter, has been extraordinary in its own unique way. They give unconditional love when there is no reason for them to do so. They show us how to live with gentleness and joy in the midst of adversity. They teach us how precious all life is. So, do not be put off about adopting a shelter dog. Any relationship takes work and, just like any other relationship, adopting a shelter dog requires caring and commitment. If you are patient, the rewards of sharing your life with one of these wonderful companions far outweighs, in my opinion, any initial challenges you might face.

If you cannot adopt, there is no reason why you cannot help this month and all the months that follow. I cannot say this often enough, "Spread the word." The more

people that are aware of the shelter and the dogs within, the better the chances are of getting them adopted. Update your status on Facebook, let everyone know that it is Adopt-A-Shelter-Dog month and provide directions to where they can find remarkable canines. Tweet, retweet and tweet again messages about adopting a dog, and provide a link, to either the Tehama County Animal Care Center's page (<https://www.co.tehama.ca.us/adopt/adoptable-dogs>), or to Petfinder (https://www.petfinder.com/search/pets-for-adoption/?shelter_id%5B0%5D=CA255&sort%5B0%5D=recently_added), or to Adopt-A-Pet (<https://www.adoptapet.com/shelter83860-pets.html>). Share dog-related articles on your social media sites to assist potential adopters in choosing the appropriate dog to fit their lifestyle and to help educate them on various aspects of care. Talk to your children and others about animal shelters and the role they play within the community, and why pet adoption is so crucial to both the community and to the animals. Anything you can do will help these animals find homes.

A common mantra among those of us who strive to improve the lives of homeless animals is "saving one animal won't change the world, but it will change the world for that one animal". What we fail to add is that it also changes our world. And, in more ways than we could ever express, it is for the better.

Our shelter, and the animals cared for there, depend on all of us. So, during this month, why not go out to 1830 Walnut Street, Red Bluff and seriously consider sharing your life with one of these amazing dogs. You will not regret it.

Ronnie Casey has been volunteering with the Tehama County Animal Care Center since relocating in 2011. A retired R.N., she strives to help animals in need within Tehama county. She can be reached at rmcredbluff@gmail.com.

After disaster, what do we learn?



Simone is about 9 weeks old, current on vaccinations and litter box-trained. She enjoys being cuddled when she is not playing and has quite a healthy purr. (Contributed)

By RONNIE CASEY |

PUBLISHED: September 4, 2020 at 1:28 p.m. | UPDATED: September 4, 2020 at 1:35 p.m.

After a natural disaster, images of the horrifying destruction dominate our newsfeeds. Most of the focus is on the devastation wreaked upon the landscape, homes, and businesses, or on the resultant human suffering and loss. But in any disaster where people suffer and die, pets and livestock also suffer and die. The consequences are

beyond measure. In 1999, Hurricane Floyd caused 2.9 million pet and livestock deaths, in addition to the thousands of pets which were never reunited with their owners. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the Louisiana SPCA estimates that 15,500 animals were rescued, but as many as 104,000 pets were left behind to fend for themselves. Of the animals rescued, only 15% were reunited with their owners, which is better than the national average of 10%.

As of this writing, according to Cal Fire thus far for 2020, there have been 7,175 wildfires resulting in 1,660,332 burned acres and 3,042 structures damaged or destroyed. Thousands of people were forced to evacuate, causing hundreds of cats, dogs, horses, and other livestock to be left behind. Many emergency shelters (such as those provided by the American Red Cross) do not admit pets, and owners are hard-put to find alternative housing for their animals in an emergent situation. Free-roaming animals are inevitably lost or left behind. In addition, studies have found that as many as 20 % of residents will refuse to evacuate because they will not leave their animals, endangering their own lives, as well as the lives of the people sent to rescue them. Some animal shelters will accept pets during disasters, but we know disasters can also threaten them, as well. Many are already operating at full capacity and do not have the room to accommodate a large influx of animals.

Because of these facts, the ASPCA conducted a nationwide assessment of emergency response capabilities for animals, the results for which are in an article titled “The National Capabilities for Animal Response in Emergencies (NCARE) Study: An Assessment of U.S. States and Counties.” The study showed progress has been made, but there is still a great deal to do. Only about half of high-population cities and counties in the US have an infrastructure for managing animals in a disaster, such as a state or county animal response team. In addition, only about one in four smaller counties have such an organization in regions much like ours, who are prone to frequent natural disasters, such as wildfires. As well, only a little more than one-half of U.S. counties have plans for emergency shelters in which pets and people can be housed together.

Most animal deaths occur within the first 24 to 48 hours of a disaster onset, when local response is critical. That loss of animal life can have not only a huge economic consequence in agricultural areas such as ours, but also a devastating psychological impact on the humans suffering those losses. Communities with well-developed animal response plans, along with trained and equipped animal response teams, are better able to protect resident livestock and companion animals during a disaster, with fewer animals lost, higher human evacuation compliance rates, and a greater percentage of pets staying with their families.

The resources available to us play a significant role in how we make our decisions. When people have limited access to viable resources, they become extremely more vulnerable when a natural disaster occurs. People who do not have a car, for example, may not be able to take their animals on public transportation. Even if the owner evacuates with their animals, the question of their care becomes complicated for all

involved. Human shelters are not prepared to care for animals, even if they accept them, and having enough supplies for care becomes problematic.

The public needs rapid information about what to do with animals when and if the order to evacuate is given. It is the one question that continually arises. If our goal is for people to prepare in advance, then foreknowledge of where animals go would be enormously worthwhile. Unfortunately, the information is often provided after-the-fact, and not easily available to those in the midst of fleeing. A possible solution is to advance designate “pet friendly” shelters. These human shelters would have a nearby area already designated for animals. A fairground serves as an ideal example. People can be housed in exhibition buildings, while other enclosed areas and stables can shelter animals, including livestock. If we can reduce the number of lost animals, it could mitigate the burden on local shelters which, we know, typically operate on limited resources and with limited staff even under normal conditions.

In this country the plight of animals is often viewed as a response issue and is frequently handled by groups that are not integrated with the community’s emergency management. Animals, their owners, and communities could greatly benefit from integrating animal evacuation issues into an overall emergency management strategy.

Hopefully, we have learned that disaster planning for individuals and for our communities must include animals and become a critical element in community disaster planning and response strategies.

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Pets also suffer during wildfires



Tex is a 4-year-old, heartworm negative shepherd mix who would prefer to live in a home by himself because he bonds easily to his people. He does get along with female dogs. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: August 28, 2020 at 3:23 p.m. | UPDATED: August 28, 2020 at 6:03 p.m.

As of this writing it seems like all of California is being impacted by fire, either directly or indirectly. Sadly, this does not only affect people. While most of the focus is on the destruction of the landscape, personal property loss, or on the resultant human suffering, it is important to be aware that in any disaster where people suffer, pets and livestock are also traumatized.

We have seen on the news that the air quality from the smoke from these multiple wildfires is ranging from unhealthy for specific groups to hazardous for everyone, including pets, livestock, and wildlife. If you can see or feel the effects of smoke, then be assured the animals are feeling the same, and it is up to you to take precautions to keep them safe. If you are wondering what the air quality is like in your area, check out the “Real-time Air Quality Index Visual Map” (<https://aqicn.org/map/california/>).

Animals with cardiovascular or respiratory disease are especially at risk from smoke and should be closely monitored during any period of poor air quality. Smoke inhalation is a serious medical condition and should not be taken lightly. Chemicals released from burned materials such as carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and cyanide are dangerous and poisonous. Inhalation of these chemicals can result in severe lung injury, burnt airways, and even death. Please consult a veterinarian if any animal is experiencing the following: Severe coughing or gagging/vomiting; difficulty breathing, including open mouth breathing and increased noise when breathing; red, inflamed eyes; bright red, blue or pale mucous membranes; nasal discharge; foaming at the mouth; lethargy or weakness; disorientation or stumbling; reduced appetite and/or thirst; and any signs of being burnt such as singed fur and skin.

If you are not able to take your pet to a veterinarian right away, place the pet in a steamy room or near a humidifier to increase the amount of moisture in their lungs. The amount of damage to the pet may not be apparent for several hours, therefore it is imperative to take the pet to a veterinarian as soon as is possible.

How can you protect them? First, keep pets indoors as much as possible, and be sure to keep windows shut. Decrease the amount of exercise time your pet gets outside. Avoid long walks and strenuous exercise. Normal exercise can resume when air quality returns to normal. Only let dogs and cats outside for brief bathroom breaks if air quality alerts are in effect. Remember also, that pet birds are particularly susceptible and should not be allowed outside when smoke or particulate matter is present. Above all, always include your animals in any disaster preparedness planning you do.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) recommends the following to protect livestock. Limit their exercise when smoke is visible. Especially do not require the animals to perform activities that substantially increases airflow into the lungs. Always provide plenty of fresh water near feeding areas. Dust exposure can be limited by feeding low-dust or dust-free feeds and sprinkling or misting the holding area(s).

In addition, plan to give livestock 4 to 6 weeks to recuperate after the air quality returns to normal. Attempting to handle, move, or transport livestock may delay healing and compromise the animals' performance. Again, have a livestock evacuation plan ready in advance. The AVMA provides a comprehensive one at (<https://www.avma.org/resources/pet-owners/emergencycare/large-animals-and-livestock-disasters>) .

Also, it is important to understand that beyond the initial impact of trauma from a disaster, animals may also suffer psychosocial aspects of trauma. First, as we all know, pets have a keen sense of smell. They will be able to smell smoke from far away and may become irritable or frightened. Other possible emotional consequences for pets can be aggression, separation anxiety syndrome, phobias, compulsive behavior, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

The disruption of routine activities can be the biggest cause of stress for pets, so try to re-establish a normal schedule as quickly as you can. Comfort each other. The simple act of petting and snuggling can reduce anxiety for both yourself and your pets.

In addition, in the days and weeks that follow a disaster, homes, landmarks and familiar scents that animals use to find their way home or recognize safe areas have simply vanished. This can cause disorientation, panic and stress, and lead helpless strays and displaced pets to face many hazardous, life-threatening situations. Upon their return, reintroduce food in small servings, gradually working up to full portions if the animals have been without food for a prolonged period. In addition, allow uninterrupted rest and sleep to allow them to recover from the trauma incurred.

Hopefully you will never have to deal with the trauma of a fire taking your home. However, certain measures should be taken if you and your pet are near a wildfire, even if you think you are not in harms' way.

Ronnie Casey has been volunteering with the Tehama County Animal Care Center since relocating in 2011. A retired R.N., she strives to help animals in need within Tehama county. She can be reached at rmcredbluff@gmail.com.

National Take Your Cat to the Vet Day



Benjamin is about 3 months old, current on vaccinations, neutered and litter box trained. He is a shy boy because the world is a scary place for a kitten. Benjamin has lived with other cats previously and they helped give him some confidence. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: August 21, 2020 at 3:00 p.m. | UPDATED: August 21, 2020 at 3:02 p.m.

Today is National Take Your Cat to the Vet Day and, though it may not be your cat's favorite celebration, it is an important day. We take our children to their pediatricians, we see our physicians, heck, even our autos get oil changes to keep everything running smoothly. However, a recent study conducted in the US revealed that 9.6% of cat owners do not take their cat to the veterinarian at all, and 27.1% visit a veterinarian only when their cat is sick. From these statistics, it is apparent that many cat guardians avoid vet visits until their furry feline is quite ill. Just like with humans, a regular health visit is important because, during the exam, the veterinarian can possibly identify future health issues before they become perilous to the pet's well-being and very expensive to treat. So, if your feline friend is overdue for that veterinary visit, now is an ideal time to make an appointment.

I would say it is safe to surmise that cats, again like us, do not relish the thought of going to the doctor. If yours are anything like mine, the first clue will be having to chase the fleeing feline around the house to be able to wrangle her into the carrier without much inflicted bleeding, just to have the absolute pleasure of listening to the non-stop yowling and whining during the drive to the vet. To moderate the whole process, I have learned a few tidbits. By bringing out the carrier out a few days ahead of time and leaving the door to open, it allows the cat to explore it at her leisure thus making it appear less threatening. By placing soft bedding and a favorite toy inside, it

also seems to make the carrier a more inviting place to hunker down. Some suggest spraying the interior of the crate with a synthetic feline pheromone product 30 minutes before using the carrier to calm the anxious kitty. Personally, I have not tried it, though I'd bet our veterinarian would appreciate it.

For a healthy adult cat, a yearly exam is recommended. For kittens and older cats the frequency will depend on age, lifestyle and health status. Throughout the exam, the veterinarian will ask you questions about your cat's diet, exercise, drinking and eating habits, behavior, whether it is an indoor or outdoor cat, and other general questions regarding overall health and other habits.

During the physical palpation, the vet will check the entire cat, looking for signs of disease or the appearance of anything unusual. She will feel his entire body to assess whether everything feels normal in size and position, and if the animal is having any tenderness of an organ or body part. The mouth and teeth are checked for any abnormalities, tartar build-up and periodontal disease. Ears are examined for signs of inflammation and parasites, such as ear mites. Additionally, the vet's observations will include whether the pet is at an appropriate weight and that the skin and hair are all in good condition.

She will also auscultate the heart and lungs. Listening to the heart detects any abnormalities in rate and rhythm, such as skipped or extra beats, or murmurs. Listening to the lungs determines evidence of increased or decreased breath sounds and any difficulty in breathing.

Cats cannot tell you how they are feeling, on top of which they can often hide symptoms of a disease that is in its early stages. Thus, a health problem can become quite advanced before the cat shows any obvious signs of illness. Indications of underlying issues detected by the veterinarian during the physical exam may prompt her to recommend laboratory tests such as a CBC, Blood Chemistry Panel, Urinalysis, and a Fecal Smear. Typically, the lab test results are given by a phone call a few days later and, if necessary, a follow-up appointment is scheduled.

At the conclusion of the visit, taking into consideration the cat's history and age, the physical exam, and the cat's risk to infectious diseases, the veterinarian will make recommendations for specific treatments such as vaccinations, external parasite control (fleas, ticks and ear mites), and internal parasite control (worms or heartworms). In addition, the vet will also discuss the cat's individual condition and decide what other recommendations would be appropriate regarding nutrition, skin care, weight management and dental care.

If we want our feline friends to stay healthy and happy, a vet visit is vital, no matter how difficult it may be to get them there or find them once they come home and resentfully hide.

Preparing for disaster Part 3



Cookie is a female terrier and American pit bull mix who is a year-and-a-half old and new to the shelter. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: August 14, 2020 at 7:34 a.m. | UPDATED: August 14, 2020 at 7:35 a.m.

Disaster preparedness is important for all animals, but it is especially important for livestock because of the size of the animals and their shelter and transportation needs.

All the animals should have some form of identification. Tattoos, brands, and microchips cannot be lost and can help you prove ownership if you are separated from your livestock. Keep photos that highlight identifying marks and copies of registration papers and ownership records with you at all times in a waterproof bag. List each one of your animals and their species, breed, age, sex, color, and distinguishing characteristics.

In addition, provide a temporary ID on the animal that is easy to spot and includes your name and a contact phone number with area code that will allow anyone to reach you. Some options for temporary identification are: use an animal livestock marking crayon, non-toxic non-water-soluble spray paint, or non-water-soluble markers to write on the animal's side. Use permanent marker to mark hooves to write your name, and phone number; use clippers to shave the same information in its coat, or attach a band or tag with the necessary information written in waterproof ink to either its halter or by braiding it into tail or mane. Be sure to post emergency contact numbers at your barn and on your pasture gates.

Ensure that, whether you stay or evacuate, there is adequate food and water available. Have enough feed and hay to last a minimum of three days, though 7 to 10 days is best. Dehydration is a major cause of death for animals in any disaster. For horses, calculate a minimum of 12 gallons per horse per day and, again, store enough for a minimum of three days. If necessary, add chlorine bleach at two drops per quart of water to purify.

Prepare an emergency kit. Include non-nylon halters and leads, bandannas to use as blindfolds, flashlights with extra batteries, duct tape, a sharp all-purpose knife, heavy gloves, rope, shovel, wire cutters, extra buckets, extra blankets, and cloth and paper towels. Also include first-aid supplies. Check with your veterinarian to find out what items are suggested for inclusion. If any animal is on long-term medication, keep at least a two-week supply available. Keep copies of medical records, including a history of vaccinations, with the kit.

Evacuate your animals whenever possible. Do not wait until the last minute to start evacuating! Create a list of friends, relatives, etc. who would be willing to board them. Familiarize yourself with organizations in the area that are prepared to rescue and shelter them. Temporary housing might include boarding stables (<https://www.equinenow.com/californiaboarding.htm>), veterinarians (<https://spottehama.com/veterinary-care>) and fairgrounds (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gNA4GcEjU3AmckYqdhCZj-0QDDYhVHU5/view?usp=sharing>). Map out alternate evacuation routes in advance. In addition, access roads may be blocked and you might have to meet at a central collection point that trailers can reach, so plan alternative ways to get the animals off the property.

Have sufficient vehicles and trailers available for transporting your animals, or know where to obtain them quickly. Real Cowboy 911 (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/270203390408097/>) is a group of volunteers who are willing to help evacuate in time of need. There is also NorCal Livestock Evacuation (<http://norcalevac.com/contact/>). If you do not have your own truck and trailer, it is wise to make a prior arrangement with a local company or neighbor before disaster strikes. In addition, train to load. A panic situation is not the time to teach or learn this skill. In emergencies, those animals that do not load easily are often left behind.

If evacuation is not possible, livestock will be safer in a pasture than in a barn that could collapse or burn. Make sure that there is easy access to clean water and forage. Do not rely on automatic watering systems. Power may be lost. In the case of horses, if you leave the halter on to facilitate catching them later, be sure to use a breakaway style. Other types can snag on branches, etc. and trap the horse. If time permits, secure or remove all outdoor objects that could turn into dangerous flying debris. Remember, in battling a wildfire, firefighters will do what they can but they are not responsible for evacuating your livestock.

The VIP Program (Volunteers in Prevention) of the Cal Fire Tehama Glenn Unit provides a “Self-Evacuation Information & Form Kit for Tehama County Horse Owners” which can be downloaded at <http://www.bayquest.com/pdf/EvacManTehama.pdf>

As a final note, animals can become fearful and, as a result, difficult to control during a disaster. Therefore, whether you own one small animal or a large herd of horses, your safety is paramount. You cannot help them survive if you are injured. The best thing you can do for yourself and all your animals in the event of any emergency is to plan before disaster strikes.

Ronnie Casey has been volunteering with the Tehama County Animal Care Center since relocating in 2011. A retired R.N., she strives to help animals in need within Tehama county. She can be reached at rmcredbluff@gmail.com.

Preparing for disaster, Part 2



Rocket is a young, male, energetic, German shepherd mix who will do best in a home without other dogs. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: August 7, 2020 at 1:15 p.m. | UPDATED: August 7, 2020 at 1:17 p.m.

Many of us are unprepared to evacuate quickly with not only our family, but also our pets. As harsh as the reality is, animals left behind during emergencies may not survive. Advance planning helps to ensure that your animals will survive and, if separated, will be reunited.

If you must evacuate, please try not to leave your pets behind. It is important that you make other prior arrangements for your pets' protection and safety. Call motels away from known hazard areas. Make sure they allow pets, and ask if there are any restrictions on size and number allowed. For those of you wanting to plan in advance, "Go Pet Friendly (<https://www.gopetfriendly.com/>) and Pet Friendly Hotels (<http://www.pet-friendly-hotels.net/pet-friendly-hotels-california.html>) provide search applications for hotels/motels/etc. that accept pets.

Ask dependable friends or relatives, who live away from the area, if your pets could stay with them during an emergency. Also, ask if they would possibly care for them for an extended period if you should lose your residence.

Contact veterinary clinics (<https://spottehama.com/veterinary-care>), local animal shelters and rescues (<https://spottehama.com/rescue>) and ask if, in the event of disaster, they provide any emergency shelter, and if they would be able to house your pet. Locate boarding kennels (<https://www.bringfido.com/>) to determine what is available. Inquire as to who stays on the premises and what provisions are made if

they need to evacuate. If you plan to board your pet, most facilities will require proof of current rabies, distemper, parvo, and bordetella vaccinations.

If you must leave your pets behind when evacuating, leave them loose inside your home with dry food and plenty of water. Never leave your pet chained or tied up. Place a notice outside, stating what pets are home. Provide a contact phone number, and the name and number of your veterinarian. In addition, in case you are away during an evacuation order, make arrangements in advance for someone you trust to take your pets, if they can, and meet you at a specified location. Give your emergency caretaker a key to your home and show them where your pets are likely to be (especially if they hide when they're nervous) and where necessary items, like medications are kept.

Put together a pet emergency supply box. It should include a minimum of three days of food and water for all pets. Do not forget to add feeding dishes, can opener and a spoon. Include these other items: A first aid kit that includes a two-week supply of any medications the pet requires; a sheet that lists dietary restrictions, feeding schedules, etc. and photocopies of medical records with proof of all vaccinations. Have separate pet records, which include: name, age, type, sex, and breed of pet; a contact name with address, phone number and area code; distinguishing characteristics; whether the pet is spayed/neutered. Be sure to microchip your pet before disaster strikes, as it will increase your chances of reuniting if separated. In case you need to create "Lost" notices, have a current photo of each pet.

It is important that you have dogs securely leashed or crated and cats placed in transport carriers. Cat carriers should be large enough to hold a small litter pan and two small dishes, and still allow your cat enough room to lie down comfortably or stand to use the litter pan. Dog kennels or collapsible cages should be large enough to hold two no-spill bowls, and still allow your dog enough room to stand and turn around.

All animals should have a collar with an identification tag attached. If cats are involved, do not forget a litter pan, scoopable litter, plastic bags, and scooper. Additional supplies that can be useful are blankets, paper and cloth towels, plastic trash bags, a flashlight with extra batteries and cleaning products.

If you have other pets such as birds, reptile or amphibian (herptile) pets, hamsters, mice, guinea pigs, etc., also prepare their specific evacuation items. Have a secure carrier large enough to comfortably contain the animal. Styrofoam insulated boxes can be used as temporary shelter for reptiles as long as they have ventilation. Place proper identification on all carriers including pet information, your name, address, and contact phone numbers with area code. For birds, have a cage cover available to keep them calm and protected. Spray bottles are also extremely useful. They can moisten a bird's feathers or help maintain the higher humidity some herptiles require. Do not forget adequate water and food, dietary supplements, extra bedding materials, and appropriate cleaning supplies. Fresh vegetables or fruits may not be quickly available during a disaster, so be sure to keep frozen items ready for emergencies. If your herptile feeds on live food, remember to consider this for evacuation as well.

The American Veterinary Medical Association provides a free booklet that includes detailed information on assembling emergency kits and plans for a wide variety of

animal species. It can be downloaded at
(<https://ebusiness.avma.org/ProductCatalog/product.aspx?ID=140>).

Being prepared in the event of an emergency



Roscoe is about 2 years old, current on vaccinations and is litter box trained. He is a social butterfly and loves attention. Roscoe would do great in any home even with kids. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: July 31, 2020 at 3:17 p.m. | UPDATED: July 31, 2020 at 3:18 p.m.

According to the Cal Fire website, "... the fire season in California and across the West is starting earlier and ending later each year... Warmer spring and summer temperatures, reduced snowpack, and earlier spring snowmelt create longer and more intense dry seasons that increase moisture stress on vegetation and make forests more susceptible to severe wildfire. The length of fire season is estimated to have increased by 75 days across the Sierras and seems to correspond with an increase in the extent of forest fires across the state."

The peak of the wildfire season typically occurs between August and November, and does not end until the first significant rainstorm of winter arrives. As of July 19, a total of 4,891 fires have burned 43,992 acres, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

"Low-income households, people with disabilities, people over the age of 65 and children less than five years old, Californians who speak little or no English, and residents without cars (potentially critical to escaping an evacuation zone), predominantly in rural areas, are all particularly at risk from wildfires", Cal Fire also states.

While it may seem tiresome to have similar information provided each year by yours truly, I cannot impress upon everyone how important it is to prepare for disaster before the need to evacuate does strike. Let us never forget the Carr and Camp fire devastation. The lives you save with some forethought may very well be your own, your family's, your animals' and those who are trying to assist you. Therefore, this article is again the first of a three-part series.

In the event of a wildfire, the Cal Fire Tehama Glen Unit Fire Department 528-5199, and the Tehama County Sheriff's Office 529-7900, will notify and assist with any evacuation of residents. Please do not call 911 for fire or evacuation information. Use 911 only for immediate-threat emergencies.

The Tehama County Sheriff's Office, Red Bluff Police Department and Corning Police Department will use Tehama Alert to provide you with critical information quickly in a variety of situations, such as severe weather, unexpected road closures, missing persons and evacuations of buildings or neighborhoods. This service is free to the public. If you would like additional information regarding Tehama Alert, Lisa Callaway or Andy Houghtby at the Tehama County Sheriff's Office (529-7940) and Matt Hansen at the Red Bluff Police Department (527-3131) will assist you. To sign up, go to <http://tehamaso.org/tehama-alert/>. Go to the Google Play or iTunes App stores to download "Everbridge ContactBridge" application to receive Emergency Alerts to your Android or iOS device. In addition, you may wish to download the "Ready for Wildfire" mobile application (<https://plan.readyforwildfire.org/>) to stay updated and get alerts when a wildfire is reported in your chosen zip code.

2-1-1 Tehama is another resource for up-to-date information, relief and recovery resources. Either dial 2-1-1 or visit <https://211norcal.org/tehama/search/emergency-disaster/>. In addition, radio scanner frequencies for Tehama can be found at <http://www.scancal.org/co/tehama/index.html>.

Emergency Alert System (EAS) announcements will be on local radio stations and television stations. The Red Bluff Daily News, Redding Record Searchlight and Chico Enterprise Record will post updated news to their websites. As well, current fire incident information can be found at Cal Fire (<https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents/>) and Yuba Net (<https://yubanet.com/Fires/>).

Please remember that if a major disaster happens, the whole community may be affected, and help may not come immediately. Listen to Emergency Alert System announcements and get ready to leave. The American Red Cross of Northeastern California 673-1460 will establish shelters for short-term housing and care of evacuees. However, they will only allow service animals, and not family pets, inside their shelters. If you choose not to go to the Red Cross shelter, still contact them to provide information about your location, in the event anyone is attempting to locate you.

Facebook also has a feature known as Crisis Response that allows users to find information and help in an affected area. In addition, Facebook will activate Safety Check to users in that area which will prompt them to let people know they're safe.

For those of you wanting to plan in advance, Go Pet Friendly (<https://www.gopetfriendly.com/>) provides a search application for hotels/motels/etc. along anticipated evacuation routes that accept pets. Ready (<https://www.ready.gov/pets>) and its Spanish language version Listo (<https://www.ready.gov/es/acerca-de-la-campana-de-ready>) is a national public service designed to help Americans prepare for, respond to and mitigate emergencies.

Next week, Part 2, disaster planning for small animals.

Dealing with pesky parasites, fleas



Mrs. McGonagall is about 4 years old, current on vaccinations and litter box trained. She is a very sweet girl with a very mellow personality who enjoys playing with toys. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: July 17, 2020 at 10:06 a.m. | UPDATED: July 17, 2020 at 10:07 a.m.

The only one in this household who seems to like any kind of bug is our cat. Always on the prowl, he enjoys the hunt. Unfortunately, the only insects even he does not enjoy are those annoying biting pests of pets and people, the wingless parasitic insects known as fleas.

These pesky devils live exclusively by consuming blood from a host organism and can consume over 15 times their own body weight in blood each day. For puppies and kittens, being infested with fleas can become a life-threatening occurrence. When young animals have a severe infestation, the fleas will feed so much that their red blood cell count decreases, causing them to become anemic. If this flea-bite anemia is left untreated, it is often fatal. While it does take numerous fleas to cause enough blood loss to create a life-threatening situation for the pet, the incidence is more common than you realize. Just ask any veterinarian, shelter, or rescue organization.

In addition, fleas can cause other issues for pets. The most common is flea-bite dermatitis, which is an allergy to the fleas' saliva. Fleas can also mean tapeworms. If you see rice-like worm bits when your pet goes to the bathroom, or see them stuck to its fur or in its bedding, go to the veterinarian to get the pet tested and de-wormed.

Do not rely on your own ability to determine if fleas are present. Only animals allergic to flea bites will itch from their fleas. Therefore, if he is not allergic, the animal will not scratch. If the pet is very effective at self-grooming, it may be hard to see any fleas. Use reliable flea control methods, regardless of what you see or do not see. While you may believe that fleas are simply part of pet ownership, and there is no way to

avoid them, you are mistaken. With the various flea control methods readily available, no pet should have to suffer because of them.

If you notice your dog or cat scratching more than usual, look for “flea dirt”. Flea dirt resembles little black pepper-like specks that are typically roundish in shape. The best way to check is to run a flea comb, or your fingers, against the direction of the pet’s hair growth, parting the hair to get better visualization. Typically, fleas prefer the back portion of the pet, especially around the base of the tail, as well as around the groin area.

If you find flea dirt or fleas in your pet’s fur, you will want to kill them quickly and thoroughly. Dawn® original dishwashing liquid is a great weapon. All you have to do is prepare a regular bath, using the dish soap instead of shampoo for the lather. The soap destroys the fleas’ exoskeletons, killing them within minutes. Dawn® is safe and non-toxic for dogs, cats, and most furry pets, but it does have the potential to dry out the pets’ skin so it is best not to overuse it. After towel-drying the animal well, combing out your pet with a flea comb should help you find and dispose of any remaining bodies. Start at the head and work your way to the tail. Have a dish of soapy water sitting alongside to quickly dunk and kill the fleas that you get. However, if your pet’s flea problem is overwhelming, call your veterinarian. Bathing and flea combing does not provide long-term protection from fleas, but it is a good option for young or elderly debilitated pets.

Always consult your veterinarian to determine what flea preventative product is best to use. Certain factors such as age, breed, and pet health will affect the type and dosage of the product used. Some products require you wait 24 hours or more after a bath before application. There are several effective ones available such as Frontline, Revolution, Vectra 3D, Vectra for Cats, and Advantage II. Unfortunately, some cheaper-priced, “naturally” labeled, over-the-counter products can be toxic to cats, or are ineffective. Be aware that when flea products designed for use on dogs are applied to cats, the result can be disastrous. Whatever product you use, watch for any signs of possible adverse reaction, such as anxiousness, excessive scratching, skin irritation, vomiting, or any other abnormal behavior. If you see any of these signs, contact your veterinarian immediately.

Adult fleas will lay eggs in bedding, in carpet and anywhere your pet goes, so simply combing and washing your pet will not eliminate them. You also need to clean and treat the environment. The regular vacuuming of floors and furniture is very effective for dealing with fleas inside. When you vacuum, don’t just cover the center of the room. Fleas avoid high-traffic areas, so be sure to hit baseboards, under furniture, under cushions and anywhere your pets sleep or spend time. Launder your pet’s bedding in hot, soapy water at least once a week. Food grade diatomaceous earth for use around humans and pets can be used outside to treat the yard without chemicals. In addition, do not invite infested feral cats and wildlife, such as raccoons, into your yard by leaving food outside.

Additional information can be found at the University of California Integrated Pest Management Program page at <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7419.html>.

Cheer up those feeling isolated, even pets



Lane is an active 8-year-old, heartworm positive, hound dog who would love a family on the go. Lane loves people. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: July 10, 2020 at 1:32 p.m. | UPDATED: July 10, 2020 at 1:33 p.m.

Today, July 11th, is “Cheer Up the Lonely Day,” a golden opportunity to bring smiles to the faces of those feeling isolated and alone. The day was originally created by a man who lived in Detroit, Michigan by the name of Francis Pesek. According to his daughter, L.J. Pesek, he was a quiet man with a heart of gold and the idea came to him as a way of promoting kindness toward others who were lonely or forgotten. While the original premise was for those who were shut-ins or in nursing homes, it can also be applied to any living entity with the capacity to feel isolated.

Loneliness describes a feeling of being alone. Loneliness functions as both a symptom of depression and a predictor of depression, which suggests that addressing loneliness as soon as possible can be helpful in alleviating depression. Whether the chicken or the egg came first is not entirely certain, but it does not matter; the presence of one can portend the onset of the other. This is because loneliness triggers feelings of depression, and depression can create feelings of isolation, hence loneliness. As the depression worsens, feelings of loneliness increase, and as loneliness increases, symptoms of depression increase. Although this loop can seem impossible to step out of, treating one can help the other.

Were you aware that both dogs and cats can become depressed and need cheering up, like humans, during those depressive instances? Why is their mental health important? As we have learned from human medicine, depression can have serious side effects. The same is true for canines and felines. A depressed dog or cat is more likely to contract an illness, and sometimes it is possible that they will not be able to “snap out of it” or recover. Acute stress can reduce appetite and exacerbate existing medical conditions like heart disease, hormone imbalances, and allergies. Chronic

stress compromises the immune system, thus lowering resistance to infection. For example, the link between stress and feline respiratory disease is well-established. The fact is plain and simple that stressed animals are more likely to develop illness and are slower to recover, if at all, than those experiencing less stress.

Human psychology research suggests that our emotional state impacts how we process information. As example, people in depressive states tend to think negatively and have a difficult time coping. People with a positive outlook approach the world with an open mind. They do not feel defeated, are up for challenge, and learn better. Animal welfare research is demonstrating that this also holds true in animals. The implication is major. The more emotionally positive experiences shelter animals can have, the more likely they are to effectively cope with shelter life.

Animals have a wide variety of emotional needs, all dependent on species, genetics, existing personality, prior socialization, and all past experiences. Good emotional health in dogs and cats typically requires: opportunities for human and compatible animal social interaction; separate areas in their environment for elimination, resting and eating; opportunities to hide in a secure place or rest without being disturbed; the ability to engage in typical behavior, such as scratching for cats and chewing for dogs; and last but not least, regular opportunities to play, exercise and engage in mentally stimulating activities.

While contemplating the above, also give this some thought. The shelter strives to keep the animals healthy while they await new homes. Providing for their basic physical needs involves major commitments of time and resources. Although the emphasis is on ensuring that the animals are free from hunger and thirst, physical discomfort, pain, injury, and disease, it is important to realize that their welfare depends not only on minimizing the negatives, but also on maximizing the positives. This brings us to the animal's need to express normal behaviors. Simply stated, dogs need to be able to be dogs, and cats need to be able to be cats. In any animal shelter that is a tall order. In one such as ours it can be an exceptionally difficult one.

Volunteers and the community can help maximize the positives by providing enrichment opportunities and activities which help in easing the stress of loneliness. Every animal at The Tehama County Animal Care Center needs our collective assistance to make a big difference in their quality of life. By contributing enrichment items like specific toys, and providing time, attention and love, the stress in these animals will decrease. In turn illness, behavior issues, and depressive states will also decrease, which increases the animals' adoptability and chances of finding a permanent, loving home.

“Cheer Up the Lonely Day” is the perfect day to encourage us to think of those who are not fortunate enough to have a supportive social network with which to share their lives, and that also includes our shelter friends. For more information about what you can contribute or suggestions on what you can do to enrich the shelter animal's lives, please contact Christine McClintock, Manager at the Tehama County Animal Care Center (530-527-3439). With your help, the lonely can be cheered up.

No cure for feline panleukopenia



Corbin is an adult male Great Pyrenees, who is neutered and heartworm negative. He is a big easygoing guy who knows sit and shake and would love to have a home on a ranch or farm with lots of other animals and good fencing. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) | July 3, 2020 at 2:51 p.m.

Feline panleukopenia (FP) is a species of parvovirus that can infect all wild and domestic members of the felid (cat) family worldwide. The virus is highly contagious, and its prevalence can be anywhere groups of cats congregate, such as kennels, pet shops, feral cat colonies, etc. Outbreaks often occur when cats are more likely to be in contact with unvaccinated cats, especially during the warm months of “kitten season”, which is now.

The American Veterinary Medical Association’s feline panleukopenia page (<https://www.avma.org/public/PetCare/Pages/feline-panleukopenia.aspx>) states, “In the past, feline panleukopenia was a leading cause of death in cats. Today, it is an uncommon disease, due in large part to the availability and use of very effective vaccines.” However, many pet owners are increasingly concerned about the risk of over-vaccination, and are choosing to vaccinate animals less frequently, if they vaccinate at all, thus animals are still losing their lives daily to this horrible disease.

Because the FP virus is everywhere in the environment, virtually all kittens and cats are exposed to the virus at some point in their lives. The feline panleukopenia virus (FPV) also infects raccoons, mink, and possibly foxes and, while cats of any age may be infected, young kittens, sick cats, unvaccinated cats, and previously unexposed cats are the most susceptible. Although there are no breed or gender tendencies, the severity of disease varies with age. Severe infection with death ensuing is most likely to occur in kittens between 2-6 months of age. Generally, adult felines are more resistant, having either received vaccinations or developed their own immunity through exposure to the virus in the environment.

The incubation period (the time from exposure to onset of clinical symptoms) of FPV is generally less than 14 days. The “shedding period”, that period of time when a virus is being excreted and is transmissible, often begins before clinical signs are observed. Therefore, it can be very hard to determine, just by looking, which animals are healthy and which are infectious. An infected cat will typically shed the virus for a relatively short period of time (1-2 days), but be aware that the virus can survive for up to a year in the environment, so cats may become infected without ever having direct contact with a diseased cat. In addition, while the FPV is not transmissible to humans, it can be spread if a person has it on their hands or clothing, and then has contact with an at-risk cat. Also, any shared food and water bowls, litter boxes, and equipment such as grooming tools, can transmit FPV.

The panleukopenia virus attacks and destroys white blood cells, weakening the immune system and putting the animal at a greater risk of contracting other infections. The first visible signs one might notice include depression, lack of appetite, high fever, lethargy, vomiting, severe diarrhea, nasal discharge and dehydration. Affected cats may sit by their water bowls for lengthy periods but not drink. In some felines the fever may come and go, with body temperature abruptly falling to lower-than-normal levels shortly before death. In kittens, infected in utero or up to two weeks after birth, FPV can permanently damage their cerebellum, a part of the brain that coordinates nerves, muscles and bones to produce body movements. Should they survive, they may have uncoordinated movement of the limbs, head and neck, head tremors, body tremors and swaying of the torso. Pregnant cats are at a high risk for fatal complications, since their immune systems are compromised by the pregnancy. In addition, the virus may cross the placenta to cause abortion or stillbirth.

In order to diagnose the disease, your veterinarian will perform a physical exam and take the cat’s history, including vaccination status. Panleukopenia might be suspected based on a history of possible exposure to any infected cats, the feline’s lack of vaccination and any overt signs of illness. A blood sample will be drawn for a CBC (complete blood cell count) in addition to obtaining a fecal sample, if possible. Severely reduced levels of all white blood cell types would indicate that FPV is the cause of illness. Diagnosis is confirmed when the FVP is found in the cat’s stool. However, the results might be falsely positive if the feline was vaccinated 5-12 days prior to the test.

Because there is not a cure for panleukopenia, the resultant treatment will consist of supportive care: to prevent secondary infections with the administration of antibiotics, to combat dehydration with fluid administration, and to control vomiting, diarrhea and other symptoms with the administration of varied, multiple medications and vital nutrition. Recovery from the FPV for kittens less than eight weeks old is poor. Adult cats have a greater chance of survival if adequate treatment is provided early.

Prevention is key to your cat’s health, and the best way to protect him and others is to adhere to a schedule of vaccinations determined by your veterinarian. For something so effective and relatively inexpensive, it would be fool-hardy to elect not to vaccinate. There are very few vaccine reactions. If your pet is not vaccinated and comes in contact with any of the other devastating diseases shed by unvaccinated animals, your pet’s risk of a severe illness or death increases ten-fold. Please seriously consider the risk of not vaccinating your pet.

Foxtails present a hazard this time of year



Leroy is a 7- to 8-year-old heartworm negative Irish wolfhound-border collie mix. Leroy is a gentle giant who loves people but isn't too interested in other dogs. This mature guy is interested in some leisurely walks and lots of relaxation. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: June 26, 2020 at 11:50 a.m. | UPDATED: June 29, 2020 at 2:13 p.m.

For pets, the summer months can be a treacherous time. Among the many hazards, such as heatstroke, that dogs can face are the seed-bearing structures of some grasses, typically called foxtails. They may seem harmless enough, but they can be exceptionally dangerous to our pets. Just ask any veterinarian.

Foxtails are designed by nature so that the moment they drop from the plant they entrench themselves in the ground to grow roots. Designed much like fishing hooks, foxtails are seed clusters that contain barbs which make it hard for the cluster to come loose from the dirt once it enters. The outside part of the cluster also harbors bacteria comprised of enzymes that break down cellular matter, helping the seed bury itself deeper into the ground past other plants. These tenacious little buggers can just as effortlessly work their way into any part of your dog or cat, from its nose to its toes, causing infection and havoc.

The most troublesome is “foxtail barley” (*Hordeum jubatum*). This grass is common in weedy areas along roadsides, paths, in meadows and even in your own backyard. It is an annual, and is soft and green from January through March or April. When the seed heads dry in late spring, the threat to animals will continue throughout the summer and early fall. There are other invasive grasses which can cause the same types of problems, such as ripgut grass (*Bromus diandrus*) and Red brome, also known as “Foxtail chess” (*Bromus madritensis*). You will find foxtails around the country, but they are most common in the western parts of the US, with the largest concentration occurring in the state of California.

The danger to your pet from foxtails is more than a simple irritation. Because these tough seeds do not break down inside the body, an embedded foxtail can lead to not only a serious infection for your pet, but if left untreated can cause his death. Their presence is not to be taken lightly or ignored. If your dog or cat is displaying any of the following signs or symptoms, see your veterinarian.

If your dog has picked up a foxtail in his mouth or throat he may gag, have a retching cough, eat grass compulsively, stretch his neck to swallow repeatedly, and salivate excessively. Large, firm swellings may occur over the cheeks and neck where the foxtails are migrating through tissue.

The most common site of foxtails is the tissue between the toes. After embedding in the skin, you might notice fluid-filled swelling between your pet's toes. Check for foxtails if you notice your pet limping while walking, or if he is constantly licking or biting at his paw.

If the animal cries with pain, is tilting or shaking his head, or scratching and pawing persistently at his ear it could mean that a foxtail is deep inside the ear canal. Since you may not be able to visualize it, your veterinarian will need to look with an otoscope. Foxtails in the ear can cause serious ear infections, and can penetrate the eardrum thus causing hearing loss.

Just like us tears, redness, mucous discharge, swelling, and squinting can all mean eye irritation. If you think a foxtail may be the culprit, seek veterinary care immediately. If it is not removed quickly, it can cause a painful corneal ulcer or even an eye rupture resulting in blindness.

If you see discharge from the nose, or if the animal is sneezing frequently with intensity, there may be a foxtail lodged in his nares. Sometimes the animal will also exhibit bleeding from the nostrils. The symptoms may disappear after a few hours, only to return later. Again, please do not hesitate in going to the vet, since foxtails can migrate to the brain.

This is another instance of 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure'. The easiest way to prevent a foxtail problem is to keep your dog out of overgrown, dried grassy areas. Stay clear of tall grasses while hiking, camping, or walking around your own neighborhood. Do not let your pets run through dry grasses, chew them, or even sniff the ground around them. Clear out foxtails, weeds, and tall grasses from your own backyard. Do not use a string trimmer on them if you can help it. String trimmers and mowers without catch-bags actually help to widely disperse the seeds. During foxtail season, be rigorous in examining your pet's fur. Keeping your pet's coat clean and well-groomed will help reduce chances of seeds embedding. If your pet continually gets into foxtails, consider purchasing some preventative gear. To protect the feet, there are many good brands of dog shoes such as: Ultra Paws, Muttluks, Kurgo, and PAWZ. Lastly, the OutFox Field Guard is a specialty item designed specifically to prevent foxtail exposure to the eyes, nose, ears, and mouth.

Remember, foxtails are not to be trifled with. Save yourself the possibility of great deal of heartache and expense by taking every precaution you can regarding them.

What it means to be a father



Blaine came into the shelter with his mom and his siblings. They are about 8 weeks old, current on their vaccinations and litter box trained. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

June 20, 2020 at 3:03 a.m.

Tomorrow is Father's Day and whether we call them dad, daddy, pop, papa, pa, or father, I believe we can all agree that the job of a father, whether biological or surrogate, human or animal, has the same basic premise of description.

Being a father means being willing to provide support, both physically and emotionally, and of taking an active part in child raising. As we are aware, the presence of a committed father greatly increases a child's chances of success in the world. Yes, Dads do a lot and, for some, it is a tough job. The amount of work it takes can exhaust anyone, including some non-human fathers. The following are examples of exceptionally devoted fathers that ensure that their next generation survives.

For a female seahorse, the male may be the ultimate dad. There is a good reason. The males not only get pregnant and incubate the eggs in their pouch, but they are monogamous and mate for life. I believe in anyone's book, for a spouse it is quite impressive. When seahorses mate after days of predawn dancing courtships, they intertwine their tails, and the female delivers her eggs (which can be as many as 2,000 at a time) into the male's pouch. Inside the pouch, the male fertilizes the eggs and keeps them snug as a "bug in a rug" for 14 days to 4 weeks, depending on species.

To ensure he keeps his babies healthy, he monitors salt levels inside the pouch, making sure they match the surrounding environment. Being an awesome pop does not stop there. His delivery can last multiple days and, afterwards, he sticks around caring for his young as they grow, preparing them for a life in the sea. For more

information check out The Seahorse Trust
(<https://www.theseahorsetrust.org/seahorse-facts/>).

In the animal kingdom, you do not necessarily need a trim, athletic body to attract a mate. In fact, males are so important to the brooding process that female emperor penguins (*Aptenodytes forsteri*) require pudgy partners. The ones who can sit on eggs for long periods without having to eat.

To help them find that zaftig spouse, a 2010 study found that females listen to the trills and squawks of the males, which Emma Marks of the University of Auckland noted sounds like “a cross between a donkey and a stalled car”, in order to tell how fat they are. The female lays a single egg, after which she returns to the ocean to feed, and dad takes over. This is why extra belly fat is important. It keeps the egg warm while dad patiently waits for mom to return.

While tending his precious egg in the frigid Antarctic weather (temperatures average -62°C /-79°F and wind gusts can be up to 192 kph/119mph.), dad will lose up to 50% of his body weight. Once the egg hatches, about 67 days later, the food-deprived pop regurgitates what is left in his stomach to nourish the chick until mom returns and dad can finally go and eat. These males really are some of the best stay-at-home-dads. Additional information can be found at The MarineBio Conservation Society (<https://marinebio.org/species/emperor-penguins/aptenodytes-forsteri/>).

Being handsome is also not a requirement to be a good dad. For example, take the giant water bug. What he lacks in looks, he more than makes up for in devotion. Giant water bugs (*Belostomatidae*), also known as toe-biters, electric-light bugs, and fish killers, are the largest insects in the order Hemiptera (True Bugs).

These bugs’ babies never lack for piggyback rides, since dad will often carry about 150 eggs on his back, which mom glued there before taking off to parts unknown. By carting the eggs around for the multiple weeks it takes for them to mature, he not only protects them, but will also take the time to dry them out of the water so they don’t get a fungal infection. He is dedicated. And by the way, if you do see one, stay away. These dads deliver one of the most painful bites of the insect world.

Rhea males will not win dad of the year based on their faithfulness, because being faithful is not in their repertoire. These large flightless birds, which are related to ostriches and emus, enjoy “spreading their wings”, but not in flight. However, you have to give this bird kudos, for after he has made it with multiple ladies, he steps up to the plate and builds nests for all the impregnated females, then incubates more than 50 eggs at a time and, finally, raises all the chicks on his own.

I think we can agree, it’s not all fun and games for the father, since once the chicks hatch, he also defends them from any aggressors, including mom if she gets too close for his comfort. While they wouldn’t win any awards for partner of the year, they do take care of their offspring very well.

This Father’s Day while we honor the men of our own family, the bonds we share and the influence they have had over us, let us also recognize all the other types and species of dads who display that same tireless dedication to the babies in their care. It is a perfect opportunity celebrate all forms of fatherhood.

Social media spreads falsehoods like wildfire



Brando is a resilient dog who has been at the shelter or a foster home since February while undergoing treatment for heartworms. He is now heartworm free. Through it all, Brando has maintained his goofy, wiggly personality. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: June 12, 2020 at 10:53 a.m. | UPDATED: June 12, 2020 at 10:54 a.m.

Social media allows us to communicate more easily than at any other time in history. But in this period of Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, benign information sharing, and social networking, have taken on a much darker side. Social media has become home to maliciousness, abuse, and incitement. In this digital age, it is easier than ever to publish false information. What is deemed as truth might only be rumor or innuendo, but the internet has made it extremely easy for these “truths” to circulate with a speed and reach that is unimaginable. The consequences are enormous and frightening.

These “truths” can be spread out of panic, out of righteous indignation, out of malice, and out of deliberate manipulation, where people are paid to convey the message, no matter how erroneous or inflammatory it may be. Unfortunately, on social media, the misleading information is forwarded and shared, often without verification, because others are doing it. The assumption is that it must be true. After all, “I saw it on the internet.” This cycle keeps repeating itself, and the momentum becomes unstoppable.

During recent riots a picture was circulated of a puppy being abused. More than one million views later, the unsubstantiated story was compounded by adding that the dog had been stolen from a rescue and was dead, and the rescue feared retaliation. As thousands more became involved, increasing politically divisive comments occurred under most of the pages where the story was posted. Certain militants released the name and address of a person who they “believed” was responsible. That action prompted animal activists throughout the U.S. to threaten a wrongly accused man.

Thousands signed petitions demanding maximum justice. The mob's "hang 'em high" mentality was in full swing. The city's Animal Service and Police department launched investigations and subsequently issued the following statement "...all we have seen are unsubstantiated claims on social media, generally from people outside of the area, none of whom can trace the information back to the source. No one has been able to present any concrete evidence to indicate the puppy is deceased. No one has made any reports... We have received no concrete information the puppy was stolen from a rescue ..." What has not been brought to light or spread with the same rapidity is that the puppy is alive and healthy. Unfortunately, that news is not quite as sensational or inflammatory.

The overwhelming craven need for publicity, financial gain and, in some cases, social acceptance on the part of the user has changed social media's original intent of easily and positively connecting to friends, family, and businesses. As a result, over recent years, the exponentially growing number of images posted on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube featuring animals abused, tortured, or killed is staggering. As of 2019, according to the Pew Research Center, seven-in-ten Americans use social media. So, it should come as no surprise that users share these graphic images as a way of exploiting the system to fulfill some intrinsic personal need.

The reasons for the posts are numerous. Some are meant to defraud, some are meant to incite outrage, and some provide entertainment for those audiences that do enjoy posts of animal cruelty. Finally, there are those that see the success (e.g. "clicks") garnered by the posting and regurgitate it to achieve a falsely perceived notoriety. Despite media sites having rules against "violence" and "offensive" posts and images, their algorithms are curated to feed us more of what they think we want to see. A contradiction if there ever was one. Unfortunately, it means that the version of the world we encounter every day in our accounts becomes distorted, and not necessarily in a healthy way.

Being barraged with posts of animals that have been, are being or, as in the case of the puppy above, falsely represented as being abused only serves to desensitize the impressionable, thus gaining acceptance that these are acts of "normal behavior." It isn't normal, as Albert Schweitzer succinctly stated, "Anyone who has accustomed himself to regard the life of any living creature as worthless is in danger of arriving also at the idea of worthless human lives."

Many studies have confirmed a startling propensity for offenders charged with crimes against animals to commit violent offenses against humans, property crimes, and disorderly conduct offenses. In addition, child protection and social service agencies, mental health professionals, and educators increasingly recognize that animal abuse is aggressive and antisocial behavior, and a reliable predictor of future human violence. It is not beyond reason for us to then say that cruelty to animals can not only erode the fabric of society, but can also potentially jeopardize our own personal safety.

We are privileged to live in an era where technology abounds. But in this era of instant information and indefinite truths, societal issues have multiplied at an alarming rate. As we can see, social media can and does shape society, just as society shapes it. If we want a more humane culture where all life matters, then it is our obligation to take away the incentives for people to perpetuate acts of cruelty, whether real or fake, for

social media impact. It is our obligation to hold social media sites accountable. It is our obligation to search for the truth in all things. And, it is our obligation to create the climate in which we wish to live.

Ronnie Casey has been volunteering with the Tehama County Animal Care Center since relocating in 2011. A retired R.N., she strives to help animals in need within Tehama county. She can be reached at rmcredbluff@gmail.com.

This is the month to adopt a shelter cat



Barbie is about 2 years old, current on vaccinations, litter box trained and negative for feline leukemia. She is a loving, social girl who is a big fan of head scratches and attention.

(Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: June 5, 2020 at 4:03 p.m. | UPDATED: June 5, 2020 at 6:13 p.m.

June is National Adopt a Cat Month, and it is also Adopt a Shelter Cat Month. With kitten season upon us, and more cats in need than ever, it is the perfect opportunity to consider giving a homeless feline a loving home. However, as with any decision that affects you, your family, and your home, it is one that should not be taken lightly. When adopting a cat, you are committing to care for him for the rest of his life, which can be up to 20 years or more. And, caring for any pet is more than providing the basics of food, water, and shelter.

Before adopting, evaluate your own wants and expectations. By being honest regarding the lifestyle both you and your family have, it will help determine the type, age, etc. of the feline that is a perfect fit. Review your current living conditions and determine what animal is appropriate. Kittens are adorable, but they require a lot of attention. Adult cats typically are housebroken and usually calmer than kittens. If you

rent, check that your landlord allows pets. If you have, or are expecting a baby, consider whether or not you will have enough time to attend to the feline's needs. If there is already a pet present, determine if it will share its home amiably with the new addition.

As I often tell everyone, understand that when you adopt, whether dog or cat, these animals have had their previous world, whether good or bad, turned upside-down. They are scared and confused. They will not immediately comprehend that the new home you are bringing them into is their salvation. For some, a few days or weeks may be all the adjustment time they need. For others it may take longer. The key is patience and understanding. Changing their environment, once again, compounds the stress they are already experiencing. To make the transition of the new cat into your life as smooth as possible, there are some things you can do.

First, prepare to welcome your feline home by making sure you have some basic essential items on hand. Food and water bowls, food, litter box and litter, cat carrier, and if you can, a scratching post. Again, to ease the transition, find out which food your pet is eating in the shelter. After the pet has settled in, you can gradually switch to a food of your choice. In the beginning, it may also be helpful to use the same type of litter the cat has been using.

Remember, this is at least the third "home" your kitty has had in its life. Even though this new home is probably much nicer and quieter than the shelter, the change is still traumatic. Cats are quite sensitive to any new environment. To make the move as comfortable and easy as possible, prepare a quiet, closed-in area, such as a laundry room, a bathroom, or a small bedroom away from the main hustle and bustle of the house. Prepare the chosen room with food, water, filled litter box, a few toys, something comfy to lay on, and a scratching post. You are now ready to welcome your new feline friend home.

Most cats are not fond of road trips, especially if they are not in the best of moods, so prepare yourself for some disgruntled vocalization during the ride home. Do not let it get to you and decide to pacify Mr. Grumpy by letting him run loose in your car, where he can possibly escape through an open window or, worse, be the cause of an accident. When transporting, be sure to always confine him in a sturdy cat carrier. It will save the both of you a lot of grief.

Once home he will, most likely, not be in the most jovial of moods, and will want to get away from everything and go hide. The cat carrier he came home in can be a nice safe hideout in the room you have already prepared. Block the door open to provide a cave in which he can feel protected. Allow your cat to get used to his room for the first few days, being sure to spend plenty of time with him. If he is hiding under the bed, or in a closet, do not force him out. Instead, try talking to him quietly while enticing him out with some special kitty treats. Let your feline set the pace. Shrinking Violet may need more time to adjust than Brazen Buster who can hardly wait to make the entire house his domain. Over a few days, slowly introduce the new addition to the rest of the family, including any other pet, always being sure that kitty, if he feels nervous, has easy access to "his" room and safe-haven. It may take a while, but eventually your cat will know that he finally has a home.

Sharing your life with an adopted cat can be a wonderful experience. The patience you show and the planning you do will ensure that you, your family, and your new feline friend will have a very long and enjoyable life together.

Ronnie Casey has been volunteering with the Tehama County Animal Care Center since relocating in 2011. A retired R.N., she strives to help animals in need within Tehama county. She can be reached at rmcredbluff@gmail.com.

We all need guardian angels



Maverick recuperates following emergency surgery. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: May 29, 2020 at 3:26 p.m. | UPDATED: May 29, 2020 at 6:07 p.m.

An animal's guardian angel will protect, heal, love, and transform the life of the animal it is watching over. The traditional African proverb, "It takes a village..." has been widely quoted when examining partnerships required to accomplish daunting tasks. Recently, it took a village of guardian angels to save the life of a dog. It is a story, I feel, worth telling.

A gravely injured puppy came to Deserving Pets Rescue in the darkest of hours. He had been traveling through our area, with his loving family, when all of them were in a horrific accident. Those on the scene saw, among the wreckage, a pup desperately in need of medical attention. He was rushed to the Veterinary Clinic in Red Bluff, where staff labored diligently to stabilize the youngster, but so many of the bones in his young body were fractured so badly, that without crucial, extensive surgery they knew he could possibly lose a leg.

There was no doubt that Maverick needed specialized emergency surgery ASAP. Unfortunately, the cost for his surgery and the emotional toll of the accident was far beyond what the surviving family members could, and can, deal with. In addition, after

surgery Maverick would require extensive rehabilitative care. This precious little tyke's options were beyond bleak.

Luckily, this woeful pup had guardian angels that were watching over him. His village continued to come together.

Because Maverick's surgery could not be delayed much longer, Deserving Pets Rescue (DPR) stepped in, without hesitation, to cover the expenses required to get his surgeries done. In addition, they raced him down to VCA Valley Oak Veterinary Center in Chico, who immediately scheduled an operating room, rounded up surgeons and got Maverick what he desperately needed.

After grueling hours of surgery, and having the multiple fractures of both his legs repaired with pins, screws and wires, Maverick rested comfortably in recovery, decked out in brightly colored casts. The surgeon believes his skull and hip fractures will heal on their own without further intervention. Of course, Maverick is not out of the woods. He will have a long, arduous road to recovery because of not only his frail condition, but also because of the other surgeries he will still require.

However, there is great news. As I write this, Maverick is recovering well, has settled into his foster home, and is recuperating as comfortably as he can. The rapid actions that everyone took truly saved this boy's life. Without the village of numerous individuals and organizations who dedicate themselves to helping animals in dire need, the result would not have been as bright. For critters like Maverick, these people are, without a doubt, beacons of light in a dark world.

Deserving Pets Rescue is a 501(c)(3) all-volunteer non-profit organization located in Red Bluff and is dedicated to saving the lives of the abandoned, injured, and sick pets of Tehama County, most of which come from the Tehama County Animal Care Center. DPR has played a significant role in saving the lives of many animals who have arrived at center in desperate want. Therefore, I am asking for your help to help them.

Unfortunately for Deserving Pets Rescue, this was a huge unexpected expense for them, and they can really use a great deal of assistance from other 'guardian angels' to help cover the cost of Maverick's multiple surgeries and lengthy rehabilitation. Just as a side note, Maverick is one of a few animals who has needed extraordinary intervention within a very short period of time by DPR, all of which have had a major impact on their financial well-being.

You can donate directly via PayPal, or through their website (<https://www.deservingpetsrescue.com/>), or you can mail your donation to Deserving Pets Rescue, P.O. Box 371, Red Bluff, CA 96080. Please let them know that the donation is for Maverick. All donations are tax deductible. If you cannot donate, I ask that you please share, and network Maverick's story and this request. Without your generous assistance, Maverick and many others like him would not have a chance for a happy, long life. I thank you in advance for any consideration, and invite you to follow Maverick's progress on DPR's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/deservingpetsrescue/>).

Mason Cooley stated, "Compassion brings us to a stop, and for a moment we rise above ourselves."

Individuals and groups came together as a village to accomplish a large act of compassion. This act of kindness, for one furry companion, became a life-saving event. We may never know the names of all those involved. Even if we do not know the individuals, we do know that they rallied together, not for gratitude, but out of concern and unbelievable compassion. They define the meaning of guardian angels.

A tribute to mothers in the animal world



Dumpling is a big, goofy boy who prefers hanging out with his people. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: May 8, 2020 at 9:09 a.m. | UPDATED: May 8, 2020 at 9:10 a.m.

Women become mothers by giving birth, by adopting, by marrying someone who already has children, and by stepping up to the plate in a variety of situations in which a mother is required. But what exactly is a mother? I think we can agree, it is one word that cannot be defined in a single, simple phrase.

A mother is not just someone who gives birth to a child. A mother represents a complex combination of feelings, behaviors, and sacrifices that occur while raising a child, whether the child is or is not biologically hers. I also believe that we can all agree that the job of a "mother," whether biological or surrogate or human or animal, is to raise the young in her care to be able to function and survive in the world.

This Mother's Day while we honor the mothers of our own family, the bonds we share and the influence they have had over us, let us also recognize all the other types and species of moms who display that same tireless dedication to the babies in their care. It is a perfect opportunity celebrate all forms of motherhood.

Just like us humans, moms in the wild will do almost anything to help and protect their young. For them, like us, it means creating a safe home base, locating food, protecting their charges from predators and teaching their young to become self-sufficient. It is not an easy job for any mom, but perhaps we can help ease their burden. We may not be able to take them out to dinner and buy them a bouquet of flowers, but we can make their world a bit safer in ours.

For example, a significant habitat for wildlife and birds is trees. One tree (even a dead one) can provide shelter, be a nesting area and offer an abundance of food. So seriously think before making any decision to remove an existing tree. Consider the impact its removal will have on the wildlife it sustains. In addition, when pruning any branches, take some extra precaution. Those few careful moments may prevent squirrels, raccoons, night heron, songbirds, and those most delightful hummingbirds from losing their young which are nested in those branches.

Fawns born in late spring will remain with their mothers throughout the summer months. The doe will hide her baby in what she deems an area safe from predators to go forage, returning up to 12 hours later to nurse. While you may come across a fawn that is seemingly by itself in the woods, be assured that the fawn's mother is most likely nearby, being aware and attentive. The best advice is to leave it alone because its mom will return. However, if the fawn appears cold, weak, thin, or injured, and its mother does not return, then please contact a wildlife rehabilitator. They will tell you how to proceed.

Actually, the advice remains consistent with any baby animal you may find, including feral kittens. Babies of certain species may be left alone all day, while others constantly stay with Mom. While it might appear those alone need our intervening help, unless the animal is orphaned or injured there is no need to rescue them. Their mother, like ours, has things handled, even if we do not think so. In these cases, mom really does know best. I included feral kittens because during kitten season (which is now) it is not uncommon to discover a nest of unattended kittens or a single kitten seemingly abandoned. Though it may go against your instincts, do not immediately scoop the kittens up and take them home or to the shelter. The kitten's mama offers the best chance for their survival. So please wait, observe at a safe distance and see if mom returns and, if the area is relatively safe, leave the kittens alone with her until they are weaned, at which time they can be trapped.

In our own species, not all moms are 'biological'. Apparently, humans are not the only ones who can become surrogate mothers. It would appear the drive to care for helpless infants is one of the common threads all of us share. Cats, dogs, pigs, and sheep are especially generous when it comes to caring and sharing. For example, some dogs have become surrogate mothers to baby chicks, pigs, kittens, and even squirrels. We have heard of cats caring for rabbits and puppies just like one of their own.

How different species take care of their young is as varied as they are. If you have ever heard the term "mother hen" you know it means a mother who constantly looks after her young. Before chicks are born, hens will constantly turn their eggs and cluck softly to their unborn. A lamb's mother has a specific language only used with her children, a deep guttural call that is very distinct so that her lambs can recognize her voice. Swans are seen with their babies on their back, so they can feed without leaving the cygnets behind, thus keeping them warm and protected.

Without a doubt, a unique bond exists between mothers and the children in their care. This Mother's Day, why not take a moment to recognize and appreciate what all Moms do, no matter the species.

Warm weather and dogs



Yeti is a year old neutered male who will do just about anything for a tasty piece of cheese. He loves the great outdoors and would make a fantastic hiking partner. (Contributed)

By RONNIE CASEY |

PUBLISHED: May 1, 2020 at 4:23 p.m. | UPDATED: May 1, 2020 at 4:24 p.m.

According to the local weather forecasts, it appears we are in a warming trend. After being cooped-up for weeks, and with the weather getting warmer, we are not the only ones eager to get outside to enjoy some fun distancing activities. However, as always, it is important to remember that when temperatures climb, the heat can be devastating to your canine companion. Being prepared can ensure Fido stays safe and comfortable during these coming months.

Every year, hundreds of pets die because they are left in vehicles. Please, I implore you, do not let your pet be one of them. On an 85-degree day the temperature inside a car, with the windows slightly open, can reach 104 degrees within 10 minutes, after 30 minutes 119 degrees and after one hour, 130 degrees. Dogs do not perspire like humans. In order to evaporate moisture from their lungs they pant, which takes heat away from their body. If the air that they are taking in is too hot, like in a parked car, then panting does not help and the animal quickly

overheats. Rolling down a window or parking in the shade does not offer protection either, since interior temperatures can still escalate to dangerous levels.

If you walk your dog, keep in mind that asphalt and pavement get exceedingly hot during the summer. In fact, hot enough to burn a dog's pads. If you would not walk barefoot on it, then do not walk your dog on it. Take care, also, when exercising your pet, being sure to moderate intensity and duration in accordance with the temperature. On hot days, limit any exercise to the cooler early morning or evening hours. Also, if your pet seems to be running out of energy, is having trouble catching his breath and is panting more than usual, let him rest. Our dogs adore us, and many will keep going despite their need to rest when their owners want them to keep playing or exercising.

Whether the two of you are playing in the back yard or taking a jaunt, always make sure you have plenty of water on hand. At home, make sure your pet's water bowl is in the shade so the water stays as cool as possible, and so your pet does not burn its tongue on an over-heated bowl.

Outside there should always be available protection from heat and sun. Shade from trees and tarps is ideal because they do not obstruct air flow. Another way to keep your pet cool is by providing a kiddie pool to play or lay in. Like people, overexposure to UV rays can give your dog a nasty case of sunburn and increase the risk of skin cancer. A natural coat that has been groomed offers protection from sunburn and can act as cooling insulation. If you give your dog a close cut for summer, consult a veterinarian about whether your pet will require a pet-approved sunscreen on its exposed areas.

When going boating with your pet, be sure your pet always has proper identification and is micro chipped in case he happens to fall overboard. Fit your dog with a personal flotation device even if you are comfortable about his swimming ability. Accidents do happen and, when on a lake or river, it can be a

long way to swim to the shore. Life jackets made for dogs keep their heads above water and have a handle on the back to make it easier to grab them from the water. Swimming with your dog is great exercise for the both of you and can provide relief from the heat. When encouraging a dog to swim it is important to be aware of his ability, stamina, shape, and breathing ability, because not all dogs are natural swimmers.

Animals are at particular risk for heat stroke if they are very old, very young, overweight, or have heart or lung disease. Some breeds, like boxers, pugs, and other dogs with short muzzles, will have a harder time breathing in extreme heat. Signs of heat stroke include heavy panting that does not ease upon rest, abnormal gum and tongue color, collapse, drooling, lack of coordination, vomiting and difficulty breathing. If you suspect your pet is suffering from heat stroke, move him into the shade or into an air-conditioned area immediately. Spray the dog down with cool (not cold) water, or drape him with cool, wet towels. It is very important to avoid ice or very cold water. Lowering the animal's temperature too quickly can cause other health problems. If he wishes, allow your dog to drink cool (not cold) water freely, but do not force him to. Even if he seems to be cooling, get him to a vet as quickly as possible to ensure that a normal temperature has been reached and that no organ or tissue damage has occurred.

If it is too hot for us, whatever the location, it is even hotter for our furry faithful friends, and it is our duty to protect them.

First aid for pets



Denali is 7-8 years old and heartworm positive. He is a very calm, easygoing dog and will need a home that can keep him quiet through his heartworm treatment. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: April 24, 2020 at 8:44 a.m. | UPDATED: April 24, 2020 at 8:45 a.m.

For many, reading about first aid is about as exciting as having a tooth pulled, especially when there are so many other juicy topics in which to become immersed. The subject even holds less appeal when it is about first aid for animals. That is, until your own pet suddenly begins choking, or is hit by a car, or eats one of the hundreds of toxins easily available and starts to react adversely. Will any of this ever happen to Fido or Fluffy? Odds are in your favor that they probably will not. But I'd bet, if you have ever had a cat or dog that has suffered a life-threatening event, you no longer care about what the odds are.

What you do, or do not do, during those first critical moments can often be the difference between life and death for your furry companion. April is National Pet First Aid Awareness Month, and even though we are approaching the month's end, it is still an appropriate time for pet guardians to become informed about providing emergency care for their animals.

You may not always be near your family veterinarian, and may find that a situation arises where the nearest vet's office is either miles away or closed, and there is no alternative but to give your pet emergency treatment, yourself. Even if that is not the case, there is no valid reason why you should not prepare for an emergency. If nothing else, these past few years should have taught us that.

Let's start by saying that prevention is the first step. While you cannot stop everything untoward from happening, you can help mitigate the dangers faced by your pets. Become familiar with items that could cause an accidental poisoning, which is one of the leading causes of emergency vet visits per year. The online ASPCA Poison

Control Center provides information to help guardians protect their pets from poisonous substances.

Pet first aid also means having a basic pet first aid kit ready in case of an emergency. Both the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) (<https://www.avma.org/resources/pet-owners/emergencycare/first-aid-tips-pet-owners>) and the ASPCAPro site (<https://www.aspcapro.org/resource/saving-lives-shelter-health-poison-control/how-make-pet-first-aid-kit>) offer excellent suggestions on putting together a kit of your own. If you already have one, be sure to check that the supplies have not expired. You might also consider adding a small pocket “what to do” reference guide. One I keep in my vehicle is “First Aid for Dogs: What to do When Emergencies Happen” by Bruce Fogle.

In addition, include within the kit a listing of any medications the pet is taking (include drug name, dosage, and frequency of dosing). Also be sure to incorporate a photocopy of his or her medical records, with proof of all vaccinations. During instances of critical emergencies, it is imperative that all your pet’s vital medical history be readily available. If you must go to an unfamiliar emergency veterinarian, they will be able to provide better care if they know the animal’s history.

Be sure to keep on-hand other items beneficial for transporting your pet to an emergency facility, among which are a couple of blankets, a few towels, a leash and a cat or dog carrier. Chances are that you will not have the time to scramble for these items when an unexpected emergency arises, therefore store everything you might need in a convenient location where it can all be accessed quickly and easily.

Once you have compiled the kit and assembled any additional items, become familiar on how and when to use the supplies in the kit, as well as standard emergency procedures like the Heimlich maneuver and CPR. Your veterinarian should always be the first resource to ask for “how-to” instruction with regard to your pet. However, there are also online tutorials available such as the AVMA TV’s CPR video (<https://youtu.be/3JHdrojxzSw>) and PetMD’s video on the Heimlich (https://www.petmd.com/dog/emergency/common-emergencies/e_dg_choking).

First aid, in simple terms, is the initial treatment given in any medical emergency. Its ultimate purpose is to preserve life, then reduce pain and minimize risk of permanent disability. In order to accomplish this effectively in any emergency, the first thing to do is to keep calm and assess the whole situation. The UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, through its media site, provides a lecture by Dr. Simon Hagley offering some basic first aid tips for cats and dogs, as well as what can be done in an emergency situation to best help your pet (<https://ucdsvm.mediasite.com/Mediasite/Play/9fff91a0102446fc9ee3a6baf574175d1d>). I highly recommend watching it.

While you may be prepared to deal with the first aid of human emergencies, you may not be as ready for your pets. Unfortunately, there is the possibility that one day your pet may have some kind of medical emergency. So, during this National Pet First Aid Awareness Month it is important that all pet guardians learn what they can do, in advance, to prepare themselves for those unplanned, frightening situations.

Pets can help educate our children



Freddy is about six months old, current on vaccinations, litter box trained and negative for FIV and FeLV. (Contributed)

By RONNIE CASEY | PUBLISHED: April 17, 2020 at 3:32 p.m. | UPDATED: April 17, 2020 at 3:33 p.m.

Children adore animals, as we often witness anytime a small child is near a cute puppy, kitten, or other baby animal. A child's reaction is usually one of unsurpassed delight. From the moment a child takes a breath, stuffed toys, books, etc. emphasize the animals that are in the world around them. Since children are inherently curious and absorb information at an astonishing rate, it is a perfect opportunity to start teaching the lessons of kindness and compassion that ensures the welfare of the animals surrounding us and the environments within which they live. If any community is to have responsible and compassionate adults, then we need to begin with the children.

In 1933, the National P.T.A. Congress made the following statement, "Children trained to extend justice, kindness, and mercy to animals become more just, kind, and considerate in their relations with each other. Character training along these lines will result in men and women of broader sympathies, more humane, law-abiding in every respect more valuable citizens. Humane education is teaching in the schools and colleges of the nation the principles of justice, goodwill, and humanity toward all life. The cultivation of the spirit of kindness to animals is but the starting point towards that larger humanity which includes one as fellow of every race and clime. A generation of people trained in these principles will solve their difficulties as neighbors and not as enemies."

Learning respect toward animals is part of learning to function successfully in society. Encouraging children to care about animals does not mean that they must become vegetarians or shun leather as they reach adulthood. Instead, it means exploring topics that are already of interest, such as the physical and emotional care of companion animals, respect for nature, animal welfare, ethical and responsible citizenship. We assume children will be naturally kind to animals without having to be taught, but that is not necessarily true. Some do not have an instinct for being gentle, and not all have family members and peers who set good examples. Teaching compassion for animals can help children develop empathy for all living things. Encouraging respect for their habitats could be an important role in protecting the environment.

Humane education reinforces tolerance, empathy, responsibility, and compassion for all creatures great and small. Storytelling and reading are excellent ways to teach all of it.

As a kid, my favorite books were about animals. Not a lot has changed since I have grown. I still love to read inspiring tales of animals, many of which have left positive lasting impressions and continue to help nurture my compassion and empathy towards animals. Sacramento-based animal rescue and relief organization Red Rover has, through their reading program (<https://redrover.org/readers/>), put together an amazing list of books that offer many golden opportunities to teach others those same valuable lessons of kindness towards all. The North Shore Animal League, through their educational program “Mutt-i-Grees” (<https://education.muttigrees.org/>), has joined with libraries and schools across the country to encourage learning through reading to raise social consciousness about shelter animals.

Because of both organizations’ concern for people and animals during this COVID-19 crisis, they are offering many free resources to parents and educators during these trying times.

Pets may not have words, but they can speak, and many books assist with understanding the communication. “Tails Are Not for Pulling,” by Elizabeth Verdick, can help a child understand what the animal is “saying” and what appropriate responses might be. One of my favorite authors, Kate Klimo (A.K.A. Bonnie Worth of the Cat in the Hat Learning Library series) in both her Dog Diaries and Horse Diaries series tells the animals’ story from their point of view, many of which are based on true-to-life situations. Book lists recommended by animal welfare and educational organizations are endless. Many suggest and endorse the same books, among which are classics like “Charlotte’s Web” by E.B. White and “Black Beauty”, Anna Sewell’s classic horse story which has captivated readers since first being published 140 years ago. More recent works include “Buddy Unchained” (in English and Spanish editions) by Daisy Bix, “A Home for Dakota” by Jan Zita Grover and Nancy Furstinger’s “Maggie’s Second Chance” and “Forgotten Rabbit,” all of which explain, in kid-friendly language, what being a responsible pet owner means while addressing difficult topics like animal cruelty, abuse, and abandonment.

Saint Francis of Assisi is quoted as saying, “If you have men who will exclude any of God’s creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men.” When children learn to care for animals, and treat them kindly, they obtain invaluable preparation in learning how to treat other fellow members of society. Learning about compassion and respect in the formative years aids in helping reduce instances of violence and cruelty to all living beings. Therefore, if we wish for a brighter tomorrow, we need to start with the children, and now really is the perfect time to begin.

Loneliness and crisis



Esther is a senior, dog friendly, shepherd mix, female who is heartworm positive and is looking for a place to live out her golden years. (Contributed)

By RONNIE CASEY | PUBLISHED: April 10, 2020 at 3:23 p.m. | UPDATED: April 10, 2020 at 3:24 p.m.

The loss of our daily routines and standard way of living, the threat of COVID-19 and all that has resulted, has put a serious emotional strain on all of us. Fear and uncertainty are extensive. In addition, even though we are now connected more than ever via electronics, it cannot replace normal day-to-day human interaction. So many institutions that we rely upon have closed: schools, libraries, movie theaters, restaurants, stores, with the list growing daily. Workplaces, like so many other venues, are telling us to stay home and stay in. Each item combines to compound not only feelings of loneliness, but also those of anxiety and depression.

Psychologist Robert Weiss defines loneliness as being more than physically alone. “Loneliness is a distressing mental state where an individual feels estranged from, or rejected by, peers, and is starved for the emotional intimacy found in relationships and mutual activity.” Multiple studies have shown that prolonged loneliness can also adversely affect physical health.

What you may not be aware of are the numerous physical and mental benefits of having a pet. The American Heart Association has determined that having a pet, especially a dog, can reduce the risk of heart disease. Other studies have shown that pet guardians are less likely to suffer from high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and stress. In addition, pet owners generally suffer fewer instances of depression and have a tendency to exercise more than people who do not have pets. Pet ownership, in normal circumstances, reduces loneliness and anxiety, lends daily structure, and lifts our mood. During these days of being locked down, pets are proving they can be a lifesaver for many, providing the companionship, consistency and joy not readily available through other means.

New York Times opinion columnist Frank Bruni wrote that “Dogs Will Fix Our Broken Democracy” because “they yank us outside of our narrowest selves. They force us to engage.” I could not agree more, and I do believe that if you ask any pet owner, no matter the species owned, they will expound on the numerous joys that come with having a pet. They will enthrall you with stories of their pets’ antics that brought belly laughs and smiles to their faces. They will also extoll the many ways their pet has provided companionship during the darkest of times, or unconditional affection when they, themselves, felt unlovable. I, too, am one of those people, for pets are, and have always been, a part of my existence since birth. They have been my closest

friends, constant companions and have often provided stability in an unstable world. I can honestly say that my life, and as a result my health, would not be the same if they were not, or had not, been in it.

Dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, and endorphins are responsible for our happiness. Dopamine motivates us towards goals and gives a surge of pleasure when we achieve them. Serotonin arises when we feel significant. When serotonin is absent, loneliness and depression appear. Playing with, or petting, a pet can elevate levels of serotonin and dopamine which help to calm and relax us. Often called the “cuddle hormone”, oxytocin promotes intimacy and scientists have found that dogs and their owners experience surges in oxytocin when they look into each other’s eyes. Endorphins are released in response to pain and stress and help alleviate anxiety and depression. Laughter is one of the easiest ways to induce endorphin release, and pets can play an instrumental role in inducing that release. The pleasure of playing with, or snuggling up close to, a furry companion can truly supply a sense of contentment and joy.

When I toss a toy for one of the dogs and watch her bound with glee, I again feel the joy of childhood. How often as adults do we yearn to experience that feeling? Engaging with a pet has the ability to take our minds off the plaguing issues bothering us, even if it is only for the briefest of moments. Because, when you are fully in the moment, you are not concerned about the mistakes of the past or fretting over possible future disasters. It is just you and your pet. As humans, we have an overwhelming need to touch. Touching an animal can soothe us when we are feeling stressed or anxious. I cannot help but notice how less tense I become when I slowly stroke my cats’ fur and listen to their purrs. Our pets can also be the perfect ones to go to when we want to talk about our day, our life, or our hopes and fears. They “listen” but do not judge, and the extra blessing is that we never have to worry about potential repercussions over what we have said.

Pets can help keep us sane while we try to find a way to slow this contagion. So, while you are washing your hands, and keeping a safe distance, do not stop doing the things that give you purpose, enrich your life, and help alleviate those feelings of depression, anxiety, and loneliness. Social distancing is an important step in curbing this virus, but you do not have to do it alone. Consider adopting or fostering a pet. There are plenty at the Tehama County Animal Care Center, 527-3439.

Tag day helps reunite lost pets with their owners



Checkers is 5-6 years old, neutered and heartworm negative. He is a happy boy who loves to play with toys, and he retrieves nicely. He loves other dogs and being active, and would need any other dogs to be active as well. (Contributed)

By RONNIE CASEY | PUBLISHED: April 3, 2020 at 3:58 p.m. | UPDATED: April 3, 2020 at 3:58 p.m.

Of the approximately 10 million companion animals who become lost each year, about 8 million, if they are lucky, end up in a shelter.

Unfortunately, only 15 percent of the dogs and 2 percent of the cats in shelters across the United States, who are without any form of identification, are ever reunited with their owners.

This exceedingly sad statistic, and to prevent the heartache associated with losing a pet, is why the American Humane Association created “Every Day is Tag Day,” to be held annually the first Saturday in April. The event’s purpose is to unite all animal care and control agencies, veterinarians, and humane organizations in urging pet owners to provide their pets with Identification tags and microchips to increase the chances of their pet’s safe return should they stray from home.

Identification tags, alone, for many years were the standard method for retrieving information in order to return missing pets to their owners. However, since 1989 when the first chips were implanted into companion animals, there has been a steady increase in the microchipping of our faithful companions. As a result, according to the Journal of the American Veterinarian Medical Association, almost 75 percent of the lost cats and dogs that are reunited is due to the presence of a microchip. Even though microchipping is a simple, reliable, and inexpensive process that can bring a pet guardian a great deal of peace of mind, not enough people are doing it.

While it is mandatory in many countries, microchipping is still voluntary within the United States. However, certain public animal agencies, human societies, and rescue organizations, prior to providing a pet to a new family, will microchip the animal. The Tehama County Animal Care Center, at 1830 Walnut St., Red Bluff, 527-3439, as part of its adoption process, will microchip both dogs and cats. In addition, if you have not microchipped your pet because of cost, please

seriously reconsider. The center will be happy to insert a microchip in your beloved furry companion for the low fee of \$15.

Microchipping is a very simple procedure and can be done in a matter of seconds. Think of it as giving an injection to a pet. Most pets go through the event without as much as a small whimper. This small computer chip, no larger than a grain of rice, is injected just under your pets' skin, between the shoulder blades. There is no need to leave your pet at a clinic, you can be present during the injection, no anesthetic is required, and your pet will not experience any more distress than it would when getting its annual vaccinations. Additionally, the chip does not typically cause any adverse allergic reactions. For peace of mind, there really is no justifiable reason not to get it done.

After the injection, a test scan is done to ensure that the chip is functioning correctly. A form is completed that records the microchip identification number, along with guardian contact information, pet name and description, and veterinarian or shelter contact information. This form is then sent to the registry of the particular brand of chip. Additionally, free of charge, you can register any brand or frequency of microchip, add pets, and update contact information online at Found Animals Microchip Registry (<https://microchipregistry.foundanimals.org/>). Whenever a lost pet is located, Found Animals provides an alert system.

A microchip does not store any personal information, nor does it function as a GPS. The chip will not do anything until a handheld scanner passes over it. If a lost pet arrives at a shelter, they will immediately pass a scanner over the skin of the animal. If there is a chip, the scanner will read the unique ID code. The shelter or clinic will then contact the registry and that registry will use the ID number to retrieve your name and phone number from its database in order to reunite you with your missing pet. Whatever registry is utilized, it is important to remember to keep all contact information current. There have been numerous instances of strays with microchips being brought into a shelter and, unfortunately, the owner cannot be located because the information originally provided is outdated.

I will continue to vocalize, as loudly as I can, that taking simple precautions can, and does, bring pets home. Dogs and cats should, in addition to being micro-chipped, wear an identification collar with their name and a contact phone number with area code. The phone number should have a working answering machine or voice-mail associated with it. The easier it is for someone who finds your lost pet to make contact, the better the chance is of having your beloved companion returned swiftly and safely.

Losing a pet is an owner's worst nightmare, but pets with ID tags and microchips are much more likely to find their way back into the arms of their loving families. It is imperative that your pets are equipped with the information necessary to be returned in case you both get separated. So, let us all ensure that "Every Day is Tag Day," and more pets than ever can leave the shelters and be reunited with their owners.

Heartworm positive dogs could use a second chance



Kirby is one of several dogs available for adoption at the Tehama County Animal Care Center. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: March 27, 2020 at 2:34 p.m. | UPDATED: March 27, 2020 at 2:34 p.m.

A few weeks ago, I discussed the revamped foster program that the Tehama County Animal Care Center (TCACC), had and how all of us involved hoped you would consider joining us in giving animals in need a second chance for a better life. Right now at TCACC there are four heartworm positive dogs who could really use your assistance and that much needed second chance.

Unfortunately for them, their chances to be adopted have been greatly diminished. The reason, in addition to the recent “shelter at home” directives and the resulting decreased adoptions at the shelter, is that many potential adopters do not want to deal with the short period of extra care required. While the cure for heartworm can be a bit taxing for some people, it is important to realize it does not make these dogs any less worthy than any other dog.

All dogs can get heartworm without preventative medication, and most dogs who contract the disease can live long and active lives by receiving the appropriate treatment. The difficulty is that heartworm therapy takes time, and dogs must be kept on low activity during the rehabilitative process. All of which, during the best of times, can be a bit challenging for the shelter.

But, with just a couple of months of some extra care, these heartworm-positive dogs can lead a healthy, normal life and with your foster help, the way will be paved for them to get the loving homes they richly deserve.

Each one has their own unique personality, just as we do, and after meeting and spending time with them, I will attest to the fact that they are just as wonderful as any of the other dogs available. However, do not take my word for it, come and meet them yourself.

Brando (01-21-20-21) is a compact bundle of love and volunteer favorite. His foster, or adopter, will need to ensure he stays calm and gets his exercise through leash walks only, which Brando absolutely worships. He is an incredibly smart, and affectionate fella, who does love his treats. When you add his award-winning personality and smile, it is extremely hard to avoid adoring this boy.

Scooter (03-11-20-03) is a “Big on personality” Border Collie/Corgi mix. For such a small package, he holds his own with the big dogs. He is happiest in a home with female dogs who ignore his “top dog” attitude. Scooter ran on his own for a long time, but now would enjoy nothing more than to traveling down the highway of life with his own special someone. All he requires is that extra “heart” help from a caring human.

Sterling (02-20-20-04) is a typical laid-back Dobie. Sensitive Sterling, as we all like to call him, is an easygoing guy looking for a big comfy couch to hang out on for a few months. He knows how to sit and shake, and is super affectionate. Sterling is good on leash, will take those yummy treats gently, and over-all is a pretty mellow fella, so keeping him calm should not be an issue.

Kirby (02-28-20-06) has the sweetest of temperaments. He is a perfect well-behaved gentleman who walks great on a leash and is not one of those “jumping-bean” dogs. Even though Kirby has heartworm, he still likes to play, and he really enjoys getting scratches and treats. You would never realize he was Heartworm positive, because he seems like any other happy dog.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there is no reason to believe that dogs can contract or spread COVID-19. In addition, be aware that Heartworm disease is spread by mosquitoes and not by dogs. Let’s face it, who wouldn’t like a companion to hang out with, especially if that entity is not going to get you sick? If you require other reasons regarding why now is the perfect time to foster, consider that outside socialization has just been thrashed, so having the company of an animal can be quite beneficial. Pets not only help us stay on a schedule, they also help maintain some semblance of normalcy in an insane world. Therefore, during this unprecedented event, why not seriously consider sharing your life with one of these dogs?

The Center will provide food, supplies, veterinary care, etc., and will guide you through the fostering process. In addition, there are experienced veteran fosters who are willing and ready to be a support system. Help is just a phone call or email away. If you are interested, I implore you to contact Christine McClintock, TCACC Manager, at 530-527-3439, as soon as possible. She will be delighted to answer any questions you might have regarding fostering one of these amazing dogs.

To cure a heartworm positive dog is to give that dog its life back. It is the ultimate second chance for that animal, and second chances are what the Tehama County Animal Care Center is all about.

Please open up your heart and home so Scooter, Brando, Kirby and Sterling's hearts can be healed.

National Pet Poison Prevention Month



Herman is a year old, neutered, Mountain Cur who is quite playful. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: March 20, 2020 at 4:31 p.m. | UPDATED: March 20, 2020 at 4:32 p.m.

March is National Pet Poison Prevention Month. Even the best pet owners are sometimes not as quick as their nimble furry friends. As quick as can be, your pet can gobble down a potentially harmful poison. Understanding what those poisons are is the first step to keeping your pet safe.

The next step is to act quickly if he's eaten something poisonous. When a pet is poisoned, rapid action and correct advice are critical to the pet's well-being. The first thing to do is to identify what your pet either ate or was exposed to. Even if your pet appears to be fine, immediately call either your veterinarian, the Pet Poison Helpline (855-764-7661) or the ASPCA Poison Control Center (888-426-4435). They can determine if the item is toxic. Do not give anything to your pet unless instructed to by a veterinarian. If it is decided that medical care is necessary take the animal, without delay, to the closest veterinary emergency facility.

According to the Animal Poison Control Center, in 2018 nearly 20% of all cases had to do with an animal consuming over-the-counter medications. It is extremely important to keep all prescription and over-the-counter medications, even those in childproof bottles, out of harm's way. Closed cabinets, not easily accessed by prying

paws, are the best for storage. Drugs containing acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol), NSAIDs (e.g. Advil, Aleve and Motrin) and antidepressants such as Prozac and Paxil are examples of medications that can be lethal, even in small quantities. Pets can also incur vitamin toxicity, especially with iron, Vitamin D and alpha-lipoic acid. Additionally, there have been several cases involving xylitol poisoning from sugar-free multi-vitamins. Supervise anyone who may require assistance taking medications, in order to prevent pills from being dropped and easily accessed by pets.

As a last note, do not think it is cute to get your pet “stoned.” Narcotics, including marijuana, can create a life-threatening risk to your pet.

Veterinary products accounted for 9.3% of 2018’s cases. Over-the-counter supplements for joints and prescription pain medications were the largest portion of these cases, simply because they are manufactured to be “tasty treats” to make it easier to give them to Fido nor Fluffy. Unfortunately, this means that pets do find them enticing to eat.

Household products like paint, glue, and cleaning supplies contribute to tens of thousands of poison cases each year.

The key to safety lies in following the directions for proper use and storage. If the label warns, “keep pets and children away from area until dry”, follow the guidelines. Products containing bleach can cause stomach upset, vomiting, diarrhea or severe burns if swallowed, and respiratory tract irritation if inhaled. Mothballs, potpourri oils, fabric softener sheets, dish detergent, batteries, cigarettes, and hand and foot warmers are also potentially deadly to pets.

Automotive products such as gasoline, oil, and antifreeze should be secured away from inquisitive mouths. Antifreeze in any amount is lethal to dogs and cats. While antifreeze products containing propylene glycol are less toxic than those containing ethylene glycol, they can still be quite hazardous to pets. In addition, other substances typically stored in the garage include insecticides, fertilizers and weed killers, which can threaten your pet’s health if ingested. When applying any agents outside, be sure to keep your pet away for the manufacturer’s recommended time. If they are exposed to chemicals or granules that adhere to their body, they may lick them, resulting in serious problems.

Mice and rats are problematic, but the poisons can be just as toxic to pets as they are to the pests they are supposed to kill. In 2018, nearly 6.3% of all cases were from rodenticides. Only one type of mouse poison has an antidote. The rest do not and are much more difficult to treat. Remember, too, that a poisoned rodent carcass is a serious hazard, as well.

Certain foods can be potentially deadly to pets. I recommend that you commit the following list to memory: alcoholic drinks, avocados, chocolate, coffee grounds, any fatty foods, tea, macadamia nuts, moldy or spoiled foods, onions, garlic, raisins and grapes, table salt, yeast-based dough, and any food product containing xylitol, which is an artificial sweetener.

They may be pretty, but both indoor and outdoor plants, along with bouquets, can be poisonous to your pets. Be sure to understand the toxicity of them before putting them

in or around your house. Some of the most common include certain types of lilies, oleander, tulip/narcissus bulbs, cyclamen, chrysanthemums, English ivy, philodendron, hibiscus, hydrangea, rhubarb leaves and certain varieties of mushrooms.

While accidents can and do happen, the less accessible any of the above items are, the less likely your pet is to get into them. To help you stay informed on potential pet toxins, download the ASPCA Poison Control Center free mobile application (<https://www.aspcapetcare.com/pet-care/animal-poison-control/apcc-mobile-app>) In addition, for more information regarding poisonous substances go to the Pet Poison Helpline (<http://www.petpoisonhelpline.com/>).

Are your pets safe from coronavirus?



Vertigo is an adult, neutered, male German Shepherd recently at the Tehama County Animal Care Center. (Contributed)

By RONNIE CASEY |

PUBLISHED: March 13, 2020 at 4:03 p.m. | UPDATED: March 13, 2020 at 4:06 p.m.

Hong Kong authorities stated Feb. 28 that a pet dog of a Hong Kong COVID-19 patient tested “weak positive” for the coronavirus. The dog was tested because its owner has COVID-19, not because the dog was showing any signs of illness. On March 4, they updated their report that the dog showed some level of virus in its nose and mouth. A spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department said the dog, which was tested several times, was still under quarantine but not sick. The dog will remain in quarantine, the authorities said, until its tests are negative.

Last week, the World Health Organization declared that the coronavirus was now a global health emergency. In the panic that ensued, people became worried, not only about their own health, but the health of their pets as well. In photos across social media, dogs wearing face masks were posted, thus causing hundreds of pet owners increasing concern.

Coronaviruses belong to the family Coronaviridae. Alpha- and beta-coronaviruses usually infect mammals, while gamma and delta coronaviruses usually infect birds and fish. Canine coronavirus, which can cause mild diarrhea and feline coronavirus, which can cause feline infectious peritonitis (FIP), are both alpha-coronaviruses. These coronaviruses are not associated with the current coronavirus outbreak.

Until the appearance of the coronavirus (SARS-Cov-2), which belongs to the beta-coronaviruses, there were only six known coronaviruses capable of infecting humans and causing respiratory disease, including the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS) identified in 2002-2003, and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS) identified in 2012. The disease caused by the SARS-Cov-2 was named 'Coronavirus Disease 2019' and abbreviated to "COVID-19". It is suggested the pathological features of COVID-19 are similar to those caused by SARS and MERS. And while emergence of this recent coronavirus is reminiscent of the SARS outbreak in 2002-2003, both the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention state that there is no hard evidence that companion animals such as dogs or cats can contract COVID-19.

So, what does all this mean, in light of the recent concerns and false information spread?

Viruses need to attach to cells to infect them, and they do this by binding to specific receptors on the cell. If a virus cannot attach, it cannot infect. Some receptors are very specific to an individual animal species, while some are more general. These differences in receptor binding explain why some viruses only infect one species (or cell type) while others can infect more. Understanding how a virus attaches to cells can assist in determining what types of cells and what species can be infected. Therefore, if the dog is a "weak positive", is it infectious to others? The answer is that while dogs can test positive for the virus, it does not necessarily mean they have been infected. It does mean, however, that the virus could be present on the fur of a dog, even if the dog has not actually contracted the virus.

Even though the virus seems to have emerged from an animal source, the current spread of COVID-19 is a result of human-to-human transmission. Therefore, there is no reason to think that any animals, including any pets in the United States, might be a source of infection with this virus. At the time of this writing, there is no evidence that companion animals, including pets, can spread COVID-19. However, since animals can spread other diseases to people, it is always an exceedingly good practice to wash your hands after touching any animal. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>)

In addition, you should restrict contact with pets and other animals while you are sick with COVID-19, just like you would with people. Other precautions to take are to have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick. Since animals and people can sometimes share diseases (known as zoonotic diseases), it is recommended that if you are sick with COVID-19, avoid contact with your pet, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, it

is imperative that you wash your hands before and after you interact with pets and handle their food and supplies. Also wear a facemask if possible.

Unfortunately, there is a bigger issue than the potential spread of coronavirus to or from pets, and that is the spread of irrational fear. According to a New Scientist repost, during the 2003 SARS outbreak, cats were being taken from the owners and killed by those worried that the animals were spreading the disease. In addition, there was a documented increase of abandoned pets. Both veterinarians and animal experts agree that in a state of panic, people could abandon or kill their pets, with others persecuting people who have dogs. Fear does influence how we react to media coverage of health hazards.

The bottom line is that COVID-19 is like any flu. Thus, washing your hands frequently is the most important thing you can do to prevent its spread, along with staying at home when you're sick, and making sure your sources for information are credible to avoid panic.

Keeping your pets safe from rattlesnakes



Buttercup is a spayed, female adult labrador and boxer mix at the Tehama County Animal Care Center. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: March 6, 2020 at 1:28 p.m. | UPDATED: March 6, 2020 at 1:29 p.m.

After the dreary winter months, many of us are eager to get outside and enjoy the sun's warming rays. Snakes are no exception. Outside temperatures between 70-80 degrees will encourage these reptiles to emerge from their underground habitats to also partake of the nicer weather. Although most native snakes are harmless, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (<https://wildlife.ca.gov/>) recommends giving these venomous snakes a wide berth. I could not agree more.

Pit vipers (family Crotalidae) are common throughout the US and include rattlesnakes, copperheads and cottonmouths. Their bites are responsible for 99% of the 300,000 estimated venomous snake bites sustained by domestic animals every year. The rattlesnake is California's only native venomous snake, with all nine species being widespread throughout the state. The most widespread rattlesnake in California is the western rattlesnake (*Crotalus oreganus*), found from sea level to 7,000 feet. These reptiles typically range in size from 3-5 feet long, with some reaching up to 7 feet. Most rattlesnakes will forage for prey in or near brushy or tall grass areas, rodent burrows, around and under surface objects and, occasionally, in the open. As you can see, they can be everywhere. Generally, they are not aggressive and will retreat if able. Most bites occur when a rattlesnake is poked or accidentally touched.

Therefore, in order to avoid any encounter with a rattlesnake it is wise to follow a few safety precautions, especially when hiking or taking Fido out for his daily walk. First and foremost, always be on the lookout. Like all reptiles, rattlesnakes are sensitive to ambient temperature. After a cool night, they will attempt to raise their body temperature by basking in the midmorning sun. To prevent overheating during summer's hot days, they will become more active at dawn, dusk or night.

Rattlesnakes blend easily into the environment, so stay on cleared and compacted trails, avoiding the tall grass, weeds and heavy underbrush where snakes may hide. In addition, never go barefoot or wear sandals or flip-flops when walking in areas where you cannot clearly see where you are placing your feet. Wearing hiking boots and long pants offers an extra layer of protection from any unexpected encounters. Step on logs and rocks, never over them, and be especially careful when gathering firewood. Also, be aware that snakes crawl along the edges of buildings where they are protected on one side. Never grab "sticks" or "branches" while swimming in lakes and rivers. Rattlesnakes can swim. At night when walking, carry a flashlight. Teach children early to respect snakes and to leave them alone. Do not touch or disturb a snake, even if it appears dead. Remember that being still is their mechanism to catch prey. In addition, even freshly killed snakes can inject venom.

Any breed of dog is susceptible, but dogs with high prey drives and those with rural or hunting lifestyles are more likely to find themselves in harm's way when it comes to being bitten. For dog owners, a venomous snakebite is a true emergency. The venoms these snakes inject are strong neurotoxins (nerve poison) and hemotoxins (blood cell poison). The most common signs that Fido has been bitten, with the face and extremities being the most typical sites, are: a sudden onset of swelling, one or two puncture wounds with accompanying pain, bleeding, and limping or flinching when the affected area is touched.

A rattlesnake bite is generally "hemotoxic" which means that it destroys blood cells by disrupting the integrity of blood vessels. The swelling is dramatic with up to 1/3 of total blood circulation being lost into the tissues in a matter of hours. The toxin further disrupts normal blood clotting mechanisms, leading to uncontrolled bleeding. This kind of blood loss induces shock and, finally, death. Dogs who receive more of the neurotoxin in the venom tend to experience more life-threatening reactions, including rapid paralysis that can affect the respiratory muscles. Facial bites are often more lethal, as the swelling may obstruct the throat and impair any ability to breathe. Again, it is a serious life-threatening injury and immediate veterinary care is necessary in order for the animal to survive.

For humans, carry a cell phone and hike with someone who can assist in an emergency situation. Make sure that family or friends know where you are going and when you will be back. In the event of a bite, stay calm but act quickly. Constricting blood vessels near a rattlesnake bite can lead to amputation so, if possible, surface-wash the wound with water, and remove wristwatches, rings or anything constrictive. Do not elevate an affected extremity, keep it below heart level. Get to the nearest medical facility immediately, as life-threatening symptoms can occur within minutes. Bites can produce extreme pain and swelling, excessive bleeding, nausea, swelling in the mouth and throat making it difficult to breathe, lightheadedness, drooling, and even collapse and shock in rare cases. Do not cut the wound and try to suck out the venom. In addition, the use of ice, cold packs, and the application of a tourniquet can be potentially harmful.

Remember, the outlook for a rattlesnake bite is good as long as both canine and human receive emergency care as soon as possible.

Fosters really do save lives



Bay is a young female DSH Tabby available for adoption at the Tehama County Animal Care Center. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: February 28, 2020 at 12:48 p.m. | UPDATED: February 28, 2020 at 12:48 p.m.

Can we talk? Or, rather, can I talk and you listen? I promise I won't take too much of your time.

As we all know, spring is around the corner and love is in the air. It's great for some, but not so wonderful for others. You see, as the weather warms, many kittens and puppies being born end up without having a parent to take care of them. At the Tehama County Animal Care Center (TCACC), the ability to take in these animals is often directly related to the number of reliable foster volunteers it has because, like most humane organizations, it does not have enough personnel to provide the very special attention these adorable bundles of fur require. Even if they do not have any

other special needs, they do not have fully developed immune systems and, because of the unending inflow of other animals, they are at an increased risk of becoming ill. As diligently as everyone will try, some will die. But these tiny lives, and others, can be saved.

Shelters are very stressful places for pets. Shelters also know that well-run foster programs can increase their life-saving capacity for care. If they can provide a less stressful environment, they can often speed recoveries, minimize behavior issues, help little ones survive, and increase the chances of adoption for all. The Tehama County Animal Care Center truly understands this. That is why I am excited to tell you that they are in the process of building a revamped, robust foster program. There already have been resultant successes from the positive changes occurring. For those of us involved, the excitement continues to build, and we all hope that you will consider joining us on this wonderful venture.

Fostering really is an important step on a homeless pet's journey to finding their forever home. A safe home environment is the best possible place for an animal's overall health and well-being. Fostering allows the cats and dogs to thrive, practice forming bonds, and improving necessary skills. Fosters allow the shelter, and ultimately adopters, to gain additional insight into a pet's truer personality as a result of being in a more natural, nurturing environment. It also enables the foster to take more accurate pictures which, in turn, aids prospective adopters to envision the pet in their own home. Foster care also frees up space at the shelter, allowing the staff to spend more time with those who remain. Fosters really are the first step to a second chance of a better life for an animal in need.

The animals that would typically be fostered at TCACC are dogs or cats. They may be infants, "teenagers", ones who are a little "gray" around the edges, or moms who are pregnant or who are nursing newborns. Or perhaps the animal may need a quiet place to rest in order to recuperate from a recent surgery. With the TCACC Foster Program, in addition to the food, supplies, and veterinary care the Center provides, they will support you throughout the fostering process, whether you are a "newbie" or an "experienced hand".

They want you to think of the Center as your "partner", sharing the same goals as you in providing the best possible care for the animal and finding the best possible forever loving home. To accomplish those goals, they will help you select an animal for foster based on your lifestyle, experience, and comfort level. They will always be responsive to your questions, because help is as close as a phone call or email away. They will be honest in their expectations. They will provide guidelines and informative materials to assist you in your life-saving endeavor. Also, experienced Center foster volunteers are willing and more than ready to be a support system for you, by offering advice, providing helpful tips, and sharing their experiences. Everyone's goal is for you to succeed.

In addition to the above, there is an exciting new resource which, at the touch of a finger, that also helps foster caregivers by providing answers to many questions and challenges faced. Maddie's Pet Assistant (<https://www.maddiesfund.org/mpa.htm>) is a free application developed by Maddie's Fund to provide you with valuable support after you bring a dog or cat home. Whether or not you are a seasoned foster, this app will not only help, but maybe even teach you a few new "tricks".

Fostering is a labor of love that will leave you with great memories to cherish long after the animal has been adopted. If you are interested in learning more and seeing some of the Center's current fosters, check out 'Buster's Paw Prints" (<https://www.facebook.com/busterspawprints/>) on Facebook.

Fosters do foster hope. Fosters do foster health. Fosters do foster happiness. Fosters really do save lives. So, please don't wait a moment longer, call 527-3439 now to become a Foster caregiver at the Tehama County Animal Care Center.

Dental health just as important for pets



Maggie is a 3- to 4-year-old spayed female shepherd and rottweiler mix at the Tehama County Animal Care Center. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) | February 21, 2020 at 2:37 p.m.

We all hate smelling bad breath. While animals may not have the best breath, do yourself a favor and do not turn up your nose to Fido or Fluffy if they are a little more odorous than usual. It could be a warning sign that they have periodontal disease. Just like us, if left untreated the bacteria resulting from the disease can spread to other organs and cause a host of other illnesses. Therefore, it is vitally important to take proper care of our four-legged friends' teeth.

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) who sponsors National Pet Dental Health Month every February, more than 85 percent of dogs and cats over four years old are affected by periodontal disease. Like us, the disease starts with plaque which hardens into tartar. Tartar above the gumline can often easily be seen and removed, but plaque and tartar below the gumline is damaging and sets the stage for infection and damage to the jawbone and the tissues that connect the

tooth to the bone. Treatment involves a thorough dental cleaning and, possibly, x-rays to determine the disease's severity.

Apparently, it is not only us humans who need their pearly whites checked at least once a year by a professional to see if there are any signs of impending problems. During the routine exam, the veterinarian will first take a history, asking if anything unusual has been noticed such as: bad breath; broken or loose teeth; teeth that are discolored or covered in tartar; abnormal chewing, drooling, or dropping food from the mouth; reduced appetite or refusal to eat; signs of pain in or around the mouth; bleeding from the mouth; and any swelling noted in the areas surrounding the mouth.

Next, he will examine the animal, including checking the head and neck for anything out of the ordinary. While checking the pet's teeth and gums for redness, bleeding and inflammation, the veterinarian will also be on the lookout for tooth loss, cracked teeth, tartar buildup, as well as any potentially cancerous lumps and bumps. Typically, this part of the exam can be done without any sedation. However, unlike us when we go to the dentist and understand that what is being done is meant to help, our pets do not comprehend the benefits of this dental check-up, thus they may react by moving, by trying to escape, or by becoming aggressive and attempting to bite.

To thoroughly examine and clean your pet's teeth and gums, most veterinarians will recommend the pet have a general anesthetic to perform any in depth dental procedure. It allows for a better teeth cleaning because the pet is not moving and the risk of injury to all concerned is minimized. Also, if x-rays are required, it ensures that the animal remains still for good film to be taken.

We have often heard that pets can clean their teeth themselves by gnawing on dental chews, toys, raw bones and antlers, but that isn't exactly accurate. Bones and antlers are extremely hard and can break the teeth of dogs who are known as vigorous, aggressive chewers. When a tooth breaks it exposes the nerve endings in the innermost layer of the tooth, the pulp. The broken tooth can be put back into service with the removal of the damaged pulp (a root canal), and a crown put over the remaining portion. However, to do so is expensive. In addition, certain bones can get caught in the dog's mouth and cause injury. Instead look for toys that are not as hard, like rubber balls, as well as toys in which you can hide treats.

There is also a belief that dry food is better than canned for dental health because it helps to scrape off tartar. While there is some truth to it, that does not mean your pet should get only dry food. There are many pet products marketed with claims that they improve dental health, but not all of them are effective. Talk with your veterinarian about any dental products, treats, or dental-specific diets you're considering for your pet, and ask for their recommendation. Also, check for the Seal of Acceptance from the Veterinary Oral Health Council (http://www.vohc.org/accepted_products.htm) to make sure that whatever alternative you choose meets the standards for effective plaque and tartar control.

Regularly brushing our pet's teeth is considered the most effective thing we can do to keep their teeth healthy. I understand that with enough patience and plenty of tasty rewards one can turn the action into a bonding experience with the goal being a daily tooth brushing. Unfortunately, I must admit it is not an experience that I have shared with either my dogs or cats. Even though it is not as effective as regular brushing, we

do provide treats, toys and food designed to help maintain healthy gums and teeth, and of course, do the regular checks and periodic deep dental cleaning by our veterinarian. As a final note, please be aware that human toothpaste is not safe for our animals, so be sure to use a toothpaste specifically approved for pets.

Do your part during Unchain a Dog Month



Beefcake is an American Bully male about 6 years old. He is a laid back, easygoing guy and available for adoption at the Tehama County Animal Care Center. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: February 14, 2020 at 3:19 p.m. | UPDATED: February 14, 2020 at 3:19 p.m.

We recently celebrated Valentine's Day. Some of us included the dogs in our home in this festivity of love and commitment. Unfortunately, for an overwhelming number of canines, their life is lived without the warmth of the human bond, much less a loving home. So this month, also known as Unchain a Dog Month, is dedicated to bringing awareness about those animals forced to live alone, chained outside without the love, care, and companionship they crave.

Dogs are social beings. Put a dog on a chain and leave him alone in one area for days, months, or even years and he will suffer both physically and mentally. These dogs endure unbelievable hardships. They suffer from erratic feedings, overturned water bowls, and have no, or limited access to, adequate medical care. Often a chained dog becomes starved, dehydrated, and ill because the chain to which it is tethered, entangles and prevents him from accessing any food or water. They suffer from extremes in weather. During winter's cold months there is no warmth. Rarely is there adequate shelter to shield them from heavy rains or snow. When temperatures soar to triple digits, they do not have the necessary protection from the sun, or the extreme heat, or sufficient clean water to quench their parched throats. Moreover, because they are in a very confined area, not only do they sleep, defecate and eat all in one place, but often it is nothing but a patch of hardened dirt or mud that is rarely, if ever, cleaned.

In many cases, the ropes or collars encircling their necks become embedded, the result of years of neglect and constantly straining to escape their bond of confinement. Chained dogs do not receive affection, simply because their owners can easily ignore them. Because they have no socialization, approaching them becomes difficult, if not almost impossible. If one takes a friendly dog and keeps it continuously chained, the animal often becomes aggressive. Unable to distinguish between friend and foe when confronted with a perceived threat, and unable to take flight, they feel forced to fight, attacking anything unfamiliar entering their territory.

In addition, they are vulnerable to other animals and other cruel people. Some are shot, others set on fire, poisoned or tortured beyond endurance. They are targets for thieves looking to sell them or use them for dog fighting. As a final indignity, the dog's chain, which is easily tangled, can slowly strangle him to death. Chaining is an inhumane practice.

Under California Health and Safety Code, it is illegal to tether, fasten, chain, tie, or restrain a dog to a doghouse, tree, fence, or any other stationary object. It is further prohibited to tether a dog to a running line, trolley, or pulley with a choke or pinch collar. It is legal to tether a dog for any activity, provided the restraining of the dog is necessary for completion of a task, is temporary, and lasts for no more than three hours in a 24-hour period. Depending on circumstances, violation of the dog-tethering laws in California is either an infraction, punishable by a fine of up to \$250 per illegally tethered dog, or a misdemeanor, with a possible penalty of up to \$1,000 in fines per dog, six months in county jail, or both.

What can you do to help a chained dog?

Call local animal control if you see a dog that is chained to a stationary object day in and day out. An official is required to investigate the situation if the dog's guardian is breaking the law. In the city limits of Red Bluff, call the Red Bluff Police Department (527-3131). In the city limits of Corning, call the Corning Police Department (824-7000). Anywhere in Tehama County other than the above locations, call the Tehama County Sheriff's Office (529-7900 ext. 1). If you do not receive a response within a reasonable period, do not hesitate to contact a supervisor. If you are still not getting an appropriate response, contact the Tehama County District Attorney's office (527-3053).

In addition, raise community awareness of the problem. Unchain Your Dog, <http://www.unchainyourdog.org/>, offers free downloads and multiple ideas for educating the community at large. Help educate the dogs' owner, with the hope they will learn to treat their pets better. You may not be able to convince the owner to unchain or even relinquish the dog. Nor may you be able to convince them to make any changes, themselves, to improve the dog's life. Nevertheless, you can try to be sure water and food are easily reached and available, that there is some modicum of adequate shelter and that you are relentless in bringing the situation before the authorities.

Be a chained dog's champion. Be his voice. That dog is counting on you.

Ronnie Casey has been volunteering with the Tehama County Animal Care Center since relocating in 2011. A retired R.N., she strives to help animals in need within Tehama county. She can be reached at rmcredbluff@gmail.com.

Hearts, love and a wagging tail for Valentine's Day



Peggy is a 4-year-old, spayed female German Shepherd at the Tehama County Animal Care Center. (Contributed)
By RONNIE CASEY |

PUBLISHED: February 7, 2020 at 1:57 p.m. | UPDATED: February 7, 2020 at 1:57 p.m.

“Matchmaker, Matchmaker, Make me a match, Find me a find, Catch me a catch...” are famous lyrics from a song from the musical “Fiddler on the Roof.” The fiddler of the title is a metaphor for surviving in a life of uncertainty, life being as unstable as a fiddler on a roof who is trying to play a simple tune without breaking his neck. Next week, when we observe Valentine’s Day, many of us will celebrate the love and devotion of special relationships in our lives. However, many will also be hoping to find a special “catch” that will help them negotiate through all of life’s uncertainties.

In addition, for some, the crux of love and companionship is to find that one true cohort who can help make you whole. The entity that would be the yin to their yang. For those of you who want that perfect companion, then as matchmaker I ask that you consider a dog. “He is your friend, your partner, your defender, your dog. You are his life, his love, his leader. He will be yours, faithful and true, to the last beat of his heart...” I do not know who originally said this, but I doubt anyone who has a dog would dispute the sentiment.

Long, truly committed relationships between humans are rare in this modern age, but who can debate the loyalty, the unwavering devotion of a dog? The examples are endless, one being a favorite tear-jerking film titled “Hachi: A Dog’s Tale.” It is a story based on a real dog named Hachikō, and is about an Akita who greeted his owner at a train station every day. After the owner died, the dog returned to the station at the same time every day until he also died, nine years later. Don’t we all long for a companion as devoted as Hachi?

Don't we all wish to be loved? To have someone devoted to us enough to be there when unwelcome circumstances darken our door, and to warm us when the world turns cold and unfeeling. Unfortunately, sometimes when real problems emerge, those we thought were committed comrades fall far from our expectations. Dogs, on the other hand, stand by our side whether we are rich beyond measure or destitute and homeless. It makes no difference, whether they are small or large. Where we go, they follow no matter the reason. They watch over us, ever vigilant in their safeguarding, even if it means the forfeit of their own life to protect us from harm. They do not weigh the odds, nor hesitate with questions. Dogs are the epitome of selflessness.

There may be no absolute definition of what constitutes a friend. However, when we think of friendships, we think of traits like loyal, faithful, non-judgmental, trustworthy, supportive, and enjoyable. A friend can calm us, make us laugh, and lift up our spirits during difficult times. I would venture to guess I have also just described the dogs with which we share our homes. I will also wager that our dogs are far more accepting of all our faults than even our husbands, lovers, other family members, and best friends are. I know, my dogs may on occasion give me a "dirty look" when I ask them to do something they do not want to do. But the nice thing is, they have never once pointed out my mistakes, told me what my character flaws were, or endlessly harped on any shortcomings I might have.

Vincent Van Gogh is quoted as saying, "If you don't have a dog ... at least one ... there is not necessarily anything wrong with you, but there may be something wrong with your life." Research has indicated that owning a pet can help us live longer, feel healthier, and help us in dealing with the numerous and diverse stressors of today's world. Because of dogs, countless lives have been saved or at least been markedly improved.

When you are single on Valentine's Day, all the romantic advertising can make you feel that you need a date to be happy. However, according to a Reuter's poll, one in five people would prefer to spend the approaching holiday with their pet rather than a significant other. Of course, dogs have some annoying habits, like drinking out of toilets and snoring louder than anyone else. But they will let you talk for hours without interrupting. There are no arguments about politics, religion, money or who ate the last doughnut. There is a reason they are considered man's best friend. They pretty much love you unconditionally.

Therefore, in the spirit of Valentine's Day I, and the staff and other volunteers at TCACC, would like to play matchmaker to help you find that amazing "catch". The only caveat is that he or she may be a tad furrier than expected and will have more than two legs. After all, a perfect match comes in many shapes and sizes. However, I will guarantee that there is a good chance you just might find a bit of the unconditional love you seek, and the enduring companionship you require, at the Tehama County Animal Care Center, at 1830 Walnut St. in Red Bluff, 527-3439.

Ronnie Casey has been volunteering with the Tehama County Animal Care Center since relocating in 2011. A retired R.N., she strives to help animals in need within Tehama county. She can be reached at rmcredbluff@gmail.com.

February is the month for responsible pet ownership

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: February 15, 2019 at 3:36 p.m. | UPDATED: February 15, 2019 at 3:37 p.m.

These days are still cold and dark, and it is not uncommon to hear that snow is on the horizon. As much as we may not believe it, the warmer days of spring are rapidly approaching. The coming of spring, however, heralds for most creatures the start of breeding season. Unfortunately, as a result, shelters and rescues throughout the country will experience an unmanageable increase in animal intake.

That is why February is designated as Spay/Neuter Awareness Month, Responsible Pet Owner Month and National Prevent a Litter Month. In addition, there is World Spay Day and Spay Day USA, which occur on the last Tuesday of February. As you can surmise, the overall goal is to encourage people to have their pets sterilized.

The decision to sterilize your pet is an important one and is one of the best decisions made for long-term pet welfare. If you truly love adorable, fluffy kittens and sweet, cuddly puppies, then understand that spaying and neutering does help to reduce the number of homeless animals in shelters, and ultimately decreases the need to euthanize any of them. It also improves overall pet health, assists in reducing unruly behaviors (another reason why pets end up in the shelter) and can save on unwanted pet care costs.

In 2017, 2,327 cats and dogs were admitted into our undersized local shelter. According to the 2016 California Rabies Control Activities Annual Report, 362,994 dogs and 311,909 cats were admitted into the 58 reporting agencies in California. In addition, it is estimated that in 2017 approximately 6.5 million cats and dogs entered animal shelters nationally. I don't know about you, but I find all these figures appalling. These animals will sit in shelters for days, weeks and months waiting for loving homes and, sadly, quite a few will never get one. Many others are abandoned, left on the streets to wander aimlessly, to suffer from disease, starvation and other forms of undue cruelty. So, if you do not believe spaying and neutering saves lives, then think again.

Just in case none of this convinces you to spay and neuter (S/N), let me continue and discuss some of the more common arguments against doing this life-saving procedure.

"It's better to have one litter before spaying". It is a common thought that female pets should have a litter of before being spayed. Here is a news flash, animals do not think like human females, therefore they will not be emotionally yearning to become a mother, nor will they have any regrets about not having babies. For them, there are absolutely no physical or mental advantages to having a litter of puppies or kittens. Since you do not need to worry about paying for years of emotional therapy, you can feel free to go ahead and make that S/N vet appointment.

“I want my children to experience the miracle of birth”. To this I say, “rent a movie.” There are numerous educational films available, not to mention the multitude of animal programs on T.V., zoos, etc. where junior can visualize the “miracle” without contributing to the overpopulation. While the birth of baby animals may teach children a love of life, this lesson can be learned in many other, more humane and positive ways. Wouldn't a better lesson be to teach them that all life is precious and that it is everyone's responsibility to insure that no animal and offspring needlessly suffer?

“My pet will get fat and lazy”. Most pets, like humans, get fat and lazy because they eat too much and do not get enough exercise. An animal may put on some weight after sterilization, but not because of the surgery. Male dogs and cats have a tendency to roam less, thus burning fewer calories. If it happens, reduce food intake and increase activity sessions.

“I want to breed my pet because it is a purebred” or “because I want another ONE just like him”, plus, “I can get good homes for the rest I don't want.” No matter how amazing you think your pet is, others may not be so impressed and that could leave you with a large number of animals that will take over your life and your wallet. Ask any shelter or rescue how easy it is to find homes for adorable puppies or kittens. If it was easy, everyone could do it, and apparently they can't. Shelter census doesn't lie. Once animals become older and not as cuddly, the job of placement becomes increasingly more difficult. The harsh reality is that many of the animals resulting from these litters will not remain in the same home for the rest of their life, and will die somewhere else, unwanted and homeless.

“I don't want their behavior to change... I don't want my male pet feeling less manly... I want them to be protective...etc.” Neutered males fight less and wander less, greatly reducing their chances of being injured or lost. And, unlike male humans, do not feel their “manhood” has been compromised. Again, no need for a therapist.

If you want what is best for animals, then just don't pay lip service to the idea, take action, and spay or neuter your pets. It really is that simple.

The origins of Groundhog Day



Tank, a mastiff mix, is about 4 years old and great with dogs big and small. He is at the Tehama County Animal Care Center. (Contributed)

By RONNIE CASEY |

PUBLISHED: January 31,

2020 at 1:01 pm | UPDATED: January 31, 2020 at 1:02 pm

One of my favorite movies is the 1993 classic “Groundhog Day,” starring Bill Murray and Andie MacDowell. The film is not only included in multiple listings of best comedy films, but the term “groundhog day” is now commonly used in the English language to describe a recurring situation.

Since tomorrow is Groundhog Day, it would be the perfect time to watch the movie if you have not already seen it and, in celebration of both, I thought it might be fun to provide a little background information.

On February 2, 1887, the day featuring a rodent meteorologist is celebrated for the first time at Gobbler’s Knob in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. A newspaper editor belonging to a group of hunters, called the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club (<https://www.groundhog.org/>), declared that Phil, the Punxsutawney groundhog, was America’s only true weather-forecasting groundhog. According to the tradition, if a groundhog comes out of its hole on this particular day and sees its shadow and runs back into its burrow, six more weeks of winter weather is predicted. If there is no shadow, an early spring will ensue.

Groundhog Day has its roots in the ancient Christian tradition of Candlemas, when clergy would bless and distribute candles needed for winter. The candles represented how long and cold the winter would be. It wasn’t until this tradition was introduced to Germany that an animal became part of it. According to German lore, if a hedgehog saw his shadow on Candlemas Day there would be a “Second Winter” or 6 more weeks of bad weather. As German immigrants came here to settle, so did their traditions. With the absence of hedgehogs in the United States, a similar hibernating animal was chosen, which leads us to today’s Punxsutawney Phil.

Groundhogs, ‘*marmota monax*’, also known as woodchucks, typically weigh 12 to 15 pounds and live six to eight years. Marmots make up a genus of ground squirrels, and groundhogs are among the 14 distinct *Marmota* species. Marmots typically inhabit ranges in cool, mountainous areas including Alaska, Siberia and the Himalayas. Just one species of marmot, the yellow-bellied marmot (*Marmota flaviventris*), inhabits California. This species enjoys warmer and drier

habitats than its cousins. These stocky, robust herbivores whistle when they are frightened or looking for a mate, thus earning them the moniker of “whistle pig”. Not only do they climb trees and swim, they go into hibernation in the late fall. During this period, their body temperature will drop significantly, their heartbeat will slow from 80 to five beats per minute, and they will lose about 30 percent of their body fat. In February, male groundhogs emerge from their burrows to look for a mate before going underground again. They typically come out of hibernation for good in March.

While Phil may be America’s most famous groundhog, there are other towns across North America that have their own weather-predicting rodents. Buckeye Chuck (<https://www.facebook.com/THEBuckeyeChuck/>), Staten Island Chuck, (<http://www.statenislandzoo.org/>) and Shubenacadie Sam in Canada (<http://wildlifepark.novascotia.ca/>) are a few of the more notable ones.

According to studies done by NOAA’s National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) , (<https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/>) and the Canadian weather service, Punxsutawney Phil has a dismal success rate of approximately 40 percent in predicting the weather. However, Staten Island Chuck, is accurate almost 80 percent of the time. Although Charles G. Hogg, better known as Chuck, is not as famous as his rival Phil, he did manage to gain notoriety in 2009 when he bit New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg on the finger during the city’s Groundhog Day event.

The other notable Chuck, Buckeye, does not have great prediction success either. Since 2006, Buckeye has been correct in predicting either an extended winter or an early spring only twice. But the Ohio legislature made Chuck the Buckeye state’s official groundhog in 1979 which helped propel him to his stardom.

Farmers despise groundhogs due to their vegetable eating habits and the holes dug by which livestock are prone to get injured. To illustrate, in 1936, a Middletown, Maryland, newspaper publisher formed the Anti-Ground Hog Association, which urged President Franklin Roosevelt to start a New Deal agency that would put the unemployed to work killing groundhogs. In addition, a 1951 editorial by The Washington Post denounced the groundhog as “a cadger, a deadbeat, a bum” and quoted the National Geographic, which called the beast “a menace to America’s food supply”.

However, these days the groundhog is more popular, thanks largely to the celebration in Punxsutawney each year. And that Groundhog Day celebration is more popular, drawing crowds as large as 40,000 from around the world, an influx nearly eight times its year-round population. All of this is due largely to the popularity of a movie called “Groundhog Day.”

What it means to be a ‘no kill’ shelter



Pictured is Dozer, a young, domestic longhair female, available for adoption. She is a quiet girl who loves to be petted. (Contributed)

By RONNIE CASEY

PUBLISHED: January 24, 2020 at 2:38 pm | UPDATED: January 24, 2020 at 2:39 pm

According to the news, in Governor Newsom's 2020-2021 budget proposal (<http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/FullBudgetSummary.pdf>) is a \$50 million grant to be issued to the UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program to give California's animal shelters the training and resources they need to meet a no-kill goal in 5 years for the state of California. If accepted by the California legislature, it is reported by the Governor's office that California would be the third no-kill shelter state in the country after Delaware and Michigan.

Before you get all excited, however, please be aware we are not comparing "apples to apples". In 2019 California had 250 organizations (out of 555 registered) that opted for transparency in providing their data to the public, and reported to Shelter Animals Count (<https://shelteranimalscount.org/home>) a total intake of 417,826 dogs and cats with a live release of 319,710. Delaware had 4 organizations, out of 13, reporting an intake of 8,925 with a release of 8,108, and Michigan had 65 organizations, out of 98, reporting an intake of 45,008 with a release of 35,850. The difference in numbers, alone, between the 3 states should give some pause.

In addition (pay attention), the \$50 million is not being issued directly to the shelters. The actual verbiage is "The budget includes an increase of \$50 million

one-time General Fund for the University of California Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program to develop a grant program for animal shelters. The program will include interactive group training for approximately 100 shelters, selected on a voluntary basis and prioritized by need; California and regional best practices summits; and an online resource library available to all shelters. Over a five-year period, this program will provide expertise, support, and local assistance to help local communities achieve the state's longstanding policy goal that no adoptable or treatable dog or cat is euthanized."

The most common accepted definition of a "No Kill" shelter is not that it never kills, but that it is a shelter with a live release rate of no less than 90 percent. The core goal is to end the euthanasia of healthy, adoptable animals. However, even by those involved in animal welfare, there is no unanimous agreement regarding definitions of "healthy" and "adoptable". In addition, there is no certifying body that bestows a no-kill label. To further complicate the issue, the term "No Kill" sets up an unrealistic public expectation that "no" means no euthanasia, ever. Anything else is believed to be a gross, unacceptable failure.

Recommendations for programs and services to achieve "No Kill," such as low cost spay/neuter and vaccinations, increased adoption events, varied offerings to increase pet retention (such as training), a foster network, etc. are all valid. The implementation of them, however, presents massive challenges. Let's face it, if we could already do all of this, there would not be a problem. Success is dependent upon not only already challenged shelter staff, but also on heavily committed public involvement in the forms of volunteers, fosters, adopters, donators, etc. which are all in meager supply. We must realize that a small municipal shelter is not an animal sanctuary, nor does it have the luxury of infinite space. For those of you not involved, understand that when discussing the euthanasia of animals we need to know why it is so hard to succeed. A majority of cities that have achieved "it" have done so with a huge amount of assistance from the private sector in the form of funds and people. A cruel fact is that most public (government-run) shelters are handicapped in abilities, especially in rural underserved areas (20.9% of Tehama county's people live below the poverty line, which is substantially higher than the national average of 13.1%). Our public shelter is no exception.

The primary purpose of our local government is to protect the welfare of its citizens. Pets are not citizens, therefore their lives are low on a list of government priorities. Although it is possible that the supervising government agency will make the shelter a priority and give it the resources necessary to reach a consistent goal of “No Kill”, do not begin to assume it will happen. The private sector needs to take on the major responsibility for creating and sustaining a “No Kill” environment. Unfortunately, the ugly truth is that many of our residents prefer to either pass-off that responsibility or simply not get involved. In addition, a government shelter is not in the business of fundraising. Yet funds are necessary for things like advanced veterinary care, comprehensive spay/neuter programs, viable TNR programs for feral cats, increased staffing, modern facilities with up-to-date equipment, etc. All of which means the money must come from somewhere. Again, it is unrealistic to expect the shelter will get the funds necessary without the help and support of the public it serves.

Therefore, my statement to you is that our shelter cannot increase its live-release rates without total community support and commitment. Until each individual shares in the responsibility and fate of the unwanted animals the shelter houses, any discussion regarding “no-kill” becomes moot. It is critical that all of us actively work towards decreasing the number of animals entering the shelter. In addition, we must ensure that shelter has adequate resources to provide programs and services that can affect live release outcomes. Finally, understand that there are extenuating circumstances where euthanasia may be the most humane action to take and the true goal, really, is to do what is best for the animal.

Change a Pet’s Life Day

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: January 17, 2020 at 1:10 pm | UPDATED: January 17, 2020 at 1:10 pm

In 2009 “Change a Pet’s Life Day” was introduced by a group who wanted to not only recognize the hard work that shelter staff and volunteers do in order to improve the lives of homeless pets, but to also encourage adoption and raise awareness about the issues facing those animals.

Each year thousands of pets end up in shelters across the country, and our own shelter is no exception. But we have the power to affect those numbers and do not have to wait until next Friday, January 24, to change a homeless pet’s life. Almost any day is an opportunity to get involved at the Tehama County Animal Care Center (TCACC), located at 1830 Walnut Street, Red Bluff (530-527-3439).

If you truly wish to “Change a Pet’s Life”, consider adopting a homeless animal. I am constantly stunned at the array of amazing animals that end up at TCACC. Each

animal is extraordinary in its own unique way. All of them have taught me a thing or two about the resilience of spirit and how precious each life is. The tangible and intangible rewards of adopting are numerous in ways you might never expect.

However, if you have not done so before, when contemplating adding another member to your family, please think about this: when you adopt an animal from a shelter, you are changing two lives for the better. You are providing a home and love to an animal that may have had neither before. You are also providing a haven of safety for an animal that will take the vacated space at the shelter. You end up giving very precious gifts to both of these animals.

If you do not know what kind of pet you want, or there are other constraints, then adoption may not be the long-term commitment you desire or need. Fortunately, fostering is a viable option to consider. There are multitude of reasons animals require a bit of temporary extra-special home care. The animals typically fostered at the shelter are dogs and cats and can be seniors, young adults, orphaned babies, or moms that are either pregnant or who are nursing their newborns.

In addition, there are animals who may require medical treatment or just need a place to recover from a recent surgery. Some animals do not do well in a shelter environment because they are frightened and need a place that is a little less scary to them. Whatever the reason, and whether you foster once or decide to do it often, I cannot state it enough, "an animal will be helped through a most difficult period in its life because of your efforts." If I have tweaked your interest and you are interested in learning more about the Center's foster program, please contact Christine McClintock, Manager at 530-527-3439.

If you are unable to open your home up to a pet, then consider volunteering. Volunteers are extremely vital to the animals and are a blessing for the staff at the shelter. By spending time with the dogs and cats, you add a richness to their existence that may have previously been unknown. Many of pets are scared and confused. Therefore, any time spent with them helps calm them and increases their chance for adoption.

If actual hands-on with the animals is something you prefer not to do, chances are you have a skill, talent, or interest that can still be extremely helpful to the critters. Whether you are social butterfly or someone who prefers solitude, whether you are an internet guru or can barely use a computer, whether you are way past the age of consent or not quite there yet, amateur or professional, your abilities are extremely valuable and can be used to help a creature in need.

If you are willing to take one small step to get involved, then please call 530-527-3439 for more information regarding volunteering. Better still, why not join us at TCACC and attend an orientation class that is held every Tuesday at 3:30 pm.

If you would like to "Change a Pet's Life", but do not wish to adopt, foster, or volunteer, then a donation can be just as effective. Often the shelter's residents require medical care that the county budget simply cannot afford. Extra funds provided for special needs animals can go a long way in making a pronounced difference in their existence.

If you prefer not to make a monetary donation, then contributing an item or two also benefits them. Items always welcomed are: All sizes of Frontline Flea and Tick Control for dogs and cats, Pill Pockets, small dog treats, all sizes of dog and cat collars, small plastic cat toys, gallon Ziploc bags, Clorox Wipes, Feliway Spray, Dawn Dish soap, Purina Kitten Chow, Purina Puppy Chow, Royal Canin Babycat Cat Food, KMR Powder for Kittens, Pet nursing bottles and extra nipples, Pet Microwavable Plate-sized Heating Pad, towels, wash rags and blankets, paper towels, and bleach.

Do not wait until next week. You can start to “Change a Pet’s Life” now.

PETS: Making a brand new ending



Juan, a shepherd mix, is one of several dogs available for adoption at the Tehama County Animal Care Center. (Contributed)

By [RONNIE CASEY](#) |

PUBLISHED: January 3, 2020 at 2:25 pm | UPDATED: January 3, 2020 at 2:26 pm

In the 2006 movie “Peaceful Warrior” a character named Dan Millman was led on a trek to a remote location by his mentor, Socrates. Dan was excited about the trip because he expected something of significance at the trail’s end, but when all he saw was an ordinary rock, he was greatly disappointed. However, after reflection, he said the following to his guide: “The journey... the journey is what brings us happiness... not the destination.”

Part of my journey began when I started volunteering at the Tehama County Animal Care Center and joined the PETS organization. Those venues opened my eyes, educated me, pulled on my emotions and introduced me to a wider scope of people and views. Both assisted in fulfilling my desire to help those who cannot help themselves. While this particular “journey” has been filled with valuable lessons, hardships, and many heartaches, the trek has also brought me happiness through the very special moments of accomplishment gained in aiding vulnerable beings in need.

There are those that believe a New Year represents a new beginning. It is thought of as making a fresh start. Personally, I believe more in what author James R. Sherman wrote, “There’s nothing you can do now to change what has already happened... You can’t go back and make a new start, but you can start right now and make a brand-new ending.” The journey to make a new ending may not always be smooth; in fact, there may be a multitude of challenges. Some of them will test the courage of your conviction, the strength of your determination, and the moral fortitude you believe you have.

Courage is the willingness to stand up for your beliefs. The world today needs more people who are willing to go against the flow when truth and public consensus are not the same thing, or when wrongdoing is ever present. Blind acceptance of the status quo is wrong when it means the tolerance of unacceptable behavior. To create a new ending, we must have the courage of conviction to be a voice for change. Our actions can make a difference. We have already seen how public pressure has been responsible for many improvements in animal welfare, but there is still a great deal to accomplish. If we wish to ensure that animals are treated with respect and dignity throughout their lives, then it is our responsibility, as individuals, to have the courage to act. Whether it is informing the authorities of instances of cruelty and neglect, or increasing public awareness about detrimental animal-related issues, each step in the right direction can mean a new improved ending for a creature who does not have a voice.

Determination is the desire to get the job done and includes characteristics such as initiative, persistence and drive. People with determination are willing to assert themselves, they are proactive, and they have the capacity to persevere in the face of obstacles. People who have “strength of determination” are not those who have never failed, or even those who have failed multiple times. They are those who get up and keep going, despite all obstacles. They have “grit”. Do you have the grit to work with others to establish programs that will address difficult problems such as feral cats, pet over-population, and how to supply food and medical care to pets for those who cannot afford either? Do you have the grit to volunteer at our local shelter or one of the many rescue organizations in the area? Do you have the grit to stop talking about what is wrong with the shelter, animal control, and every other agency dealing with animal welfare within our town, county, state, etc. and do something to improve whatever situation you are complaining about? Do you have the grit to get the necessary work done?

To have moral fortitude is to have the courage to speak out and act for what is right, even in the face of opposition. It is having the strength of character to do the right thing, even if it is not popular. It is a willingness to take a stand. In its most mundane form, it is merely the act of doing the right thing when it is much easier to do otherwise. If we truly believe that animals are to be treated with respect and dignity

throughout their lives, then it is our moral fortitude that ensures that the following “Five Freedoms” are provided to them: Freedom from hunger and thirst; Freedom from discomfort; Freedom from pain, injury, or disease; Freedom to express normal behavior; and Freedom from fear and distress. If these “Freedoms” are lacking, then it is our moral responsibility to work towards remedying their situation. Any animal, whether pet or product, must be protected from unnecessary suffering.

The New Year brings us a golden opportunity to make a “brand new ending” not only for us, but also for those who are dependent upon our courage of conviction, the strength of our determination, and our moral fortitude. Every positive step we can take towards the greater good, no matter how small, will move us all closer to becoming more humane. Everyone can benefit from the “journey” we choose to take this year.
