


Veterinarians and the Relinquishment of Pets to Shelters – How Can you Help?

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Top 10 Reasons for dog relinquishment

- Moving
- Landlord issues
- Cost
- No time
- Inadequate facilities
- Too many pets
- Pet illness(es)
- Personal problems
- Biting
- No home for littermates

Top 10 reasons for feline relinquishment

- Too many
- Allergies
- Moving
- Cost
- Landlord issues
- Litter of kittens
- House soiling
- Personal problems
- Inadequate facilities
- Problems with other pets

Behavioral reasons for relinquishment (dog)

- Destructive
- House-soiling
- Aggression
- Escapes
- Disobedient
- Barking

Behavior problems are the leading cause of relinquishment of dogs

Relinquishment statistics- Dog characteristics

- 30% are purebred
- Dogs are usually...
 - Owned < 1 year
 - Sexually intact
 - Less than 2 years old

Behavioral Reasons for Relinquishment (Cats)

- House soiling
- Problems with other pets
- Aggression toward people
- Destructive behavior
- Aggression toward animals
- Bites
- Disobedient
- Euthanasia for behavioral reasons
- Unfriendly
- Afraid


	Cat Characteristics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cats are usually.. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Owned less than 1 year - Less than 3 years old - Females > Males

	Relinquishment statistics- risk factors for relinquishment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ > 1 pet in house ■ Children in house ■ Less knowledge about pet behavior and biology

	Emotions of the Relinquisher
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Many people relinquishing their pet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care for them deeply - Don't know how to solve the 'issues' with their pet - Don't understand the magnitude of problems in shelters

	Managing Behavior Problems in a Shelter vs. Preventing Behavior Problems from Developing and Keeping the Pet in its HOME
	<div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;"> Remember the starfish story...it's better to be the safety net, than it is to be the bulldozer inefficiently pushing the starfish back out to sea... </div>

	Veterinarians are often the only safety net between owners, their pet, and the shelter...
	
	<div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;"> 70% of dogs and 50% of cats relinquished to shelters visited their veterinarian at least once in the year preceding relinquishment </div>

	Know the advantages and disadvantages of early spay/neuter
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Early age = < 5.5 months ■ Knowledge allows owners to make an informed decision ■ Knowledge allows us to educate other veterinarians
	

Advantages of Early-age Gonadectomy	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Population control ■ Quicker anesthetic recovery, less complications ■ Less obesity (dogs) ■ Less escaping (dogs) ■ Less separation anxiety (dogs)


Disadvantages of early-age gonadectomy	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increased hormone-related urinary incontinence (dogs, 12.9% early age vs. 5% traditional) ■ Recommend spay dogs (if possible) over 3 months of age

Age of gonadectomy has no effect on..	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Long bone fractures ■ Urethral obstruction ■ Diabetes Mellitus ■ Skin Disease ■ Immune Deficiencies ■ Mortality

How you can help...	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learn about behavior.... ■ Educate clients ■ Educate pets (training) ■ Educate breeders ■ Support your local shelter ■ Be the safety net...

Learning about behavior...	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ You don't have to be an expert ■ Knowing certain facts will save many lives ■ Know when to refer, and where to refer to...

Goals of the new pet appointment	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Introductions ■ Evaluation of client and pet ■ Create bond between client, pet, and veterinarian/veterinary practice ■ Take steps to maintain the bond ■ Client education ■ Physical examination

Important information for the client to gain during the initial appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Day care ■ Boarding ■ Emergency care ■ Training ■ Behavior consultations ■ Grooming ■ Recommended reading 

Recommended Reading, for pet owners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <u>The other end of the leash</u>, Patricia McConnell ■ <u>How to teach a new dog old tricks</u>, Ian Dunbar ■ <u>Cat Behavior and Training</u>, Lowell Ackerman

Recommended reading, for veterinarians
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <u>Behavior Problems of the dog and cat</u>, Landsberg, Hunthausen, Ackerman ■ <u>Great dog adoptions</u>, Sue Sternberg ■ <u>Don't shoot the dog</u>, Karen Pryor ■ <u>The art of veterinary practice</u>, Myrna Milani

Evaluation of client
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pet ownership history ■ Behavior/training experience

Pet Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Behavioral questions/<u>questionnaire</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housebreaking - Destruction - Fear - Aggression - Barking - Energy level - Training

Pet Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <u>Behavior assessment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sociability - Energy level - Anxiety - Aggression - Fear - Food/toy motivation - Training

Slide 19

SS2 [hyperlink to example sheet](#)
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Slide 23

- SS7**
1. How many times has your new pet had accidents in the house?
 2. What are you doing to make sure that your pet is housebroken?
 3. What kind of things has your dog destroyed?
 4. Spike just growled at me when I took his temperature. Has he ever growled or snapped at you?

 5. How is your dog settling into his/her new home?
 6. Has his/her energy level increased/decreased as it has adjusted to its new environment?
 7. Have you enrolled in a training class yet? Where?
 8. I see that Spike is very energetic. Have you heard of the head halter type collar that makes it easier to walk him?

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Slide 24

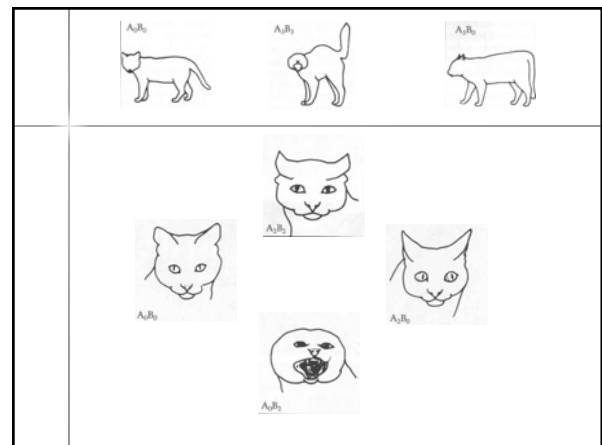
SS5 [insert video links with examples....](#)

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	Evaluation of Data
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Importance for clinic ■ Importance for pet owner

	Education of the pet owner...what all pet owners should know
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	Body Language
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fear ■ Arousal ■ Aggression ■ Anxiety ■ Displacement Behavior



	Stress, experience and behavior
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Stress in new environment ■ Changes in pet after arrival in home occur over days...weeks...months ■ Influence of positive/negative experiences on behavior problems ■ Behavioral 'risk periods'- adolescence and when reach social maturity

	Warning signs for clients
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Aggression ■ Fear ■ Anxiety ■ Excessive barking ■ Inappropriate elimination ■ Poor attention span ■ Scratching furniture

Normal Behavior	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rewards/Motivation ■ Destruction ■ "Inappropriate" urination/defecation ■ Barking ■ Scratching 	

Training recommendations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assume new dog is behaviorally similar to a young puppy ■ Create structure ■ What are the client's goals? ■ Why is training important? 	

Confinement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Important for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - long term success in home - preventing destructive behavior, house soiling problems 	

When home...	

When Not Home....	
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Housebreaking	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Basics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supervision - Access - NO PUNISHMENT ■ Extras <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rewards - Eliminate on Command 	

Slide 31

SS10 puppy computer pee
destruction
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Feline Housetraining	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ideal litter box management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Scoop once daily – Empty/clean box once weekly – Uncovered box in quiet location – Fine/clumping litter – Number of boxes 	<p>House soiling is the number one behavioral cause of feline relinquishment!</p>

Destructive Behavior	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Management is the key to success ■ Keep valuable items AWAY from pet ■ Provide pet with many different 'suitable' toys 	

“SIT”	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Teach owners to teach “sit” ■ Behavioral Prophylaxis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Jumping – Bolting – Aggression?! ■ Building block 	

‘RETRIEVE’	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Retrieving is teaching pet to SHARE, instead of teaching them to steal toys so that you chase them ■ Cats that retrieve are very entertaining for guests! ■ An easy way to reduce energy 	

Behavior Modification Nothing in Life is Free	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dog must ‘work’ for everything he/she gets ■ Ignore dog when he/she is asking for attention ■ Call dog to you when it is calm, relaxed-ask dog to perform a cue ■ Reward dog for good behavior with food, attention, a walk, going outside, etc., 	

Exercise	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Structured, interactive exercise ■ Regularly scheduled exercise 	

Recommend Gentle Leaders!



Implementation

- Educate all appropriate staff re: evaluation process
- Set up a consistent behavioral evaluation plan, for all pets



Implementation

- Prepare informational handouts/resources
 - Body language
 - Warning signs
 - Basic behavior problems (jumping up, etc.)
 - Resources

Implementation

- Identify one staff member as behavior coordinator
- Consider hiring a dog trainer as behavior coordinator, and for training classes
- For MINIMUM standard of care, evaluate pet and REFER them

Exam Room Demos

- Lure Training
 - Sit, stay, down, come, drop it
- Handling
 - Grooming, ears, nails, teeth

Become familiar with the trainers in your area

- Positive reinforcement
- APDT certified
- Start a database of recommended/not recommended trainers

Slide 46

- SS6**
1. How did you become interested in dog training? Where did you learn how to train dogs?
 2. What was your most challenging/memorable client/pet thus far?
 3. What types of training classes have you taught?
 4. What do you use as rewards?
 5. What do you use as punishment?
 6. What types of dogs/situations are you not comfortable working with?
 7. Why do you want to become associated with our hospital?
 8. Do you work with cats?

training classes

You can charge for these!

Technicians can be trained to teach them, or hire a local trainer

Puppies can become habituated to the clinic

Bonds owners to your practice!

It's a great way to socialize puppies!


Many resources are currently available

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	Implementation- Collaboration
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Introduce yourself to local trainers, shelters, veterinarians ■ Be a part of making your community a better place for all animals ■ Forming these relationships can help to decrease euthanasia

	Follow-up
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Follow-up at 3 days, 3 weeks, 3 months...

	Resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Third year Behavior elective ■ UCD Behavior Symposium ■ www.vetbehaviorists.org ■ www.apdt.com ■ www.petpopulation.org ■ Annual Behavior Conference www.avma.org (in Hawaii this summer!!) ■ American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior www.avsab.us <p>Sheila Segurson DVM sasegurson@yahoo.com</p>



Veterinarian's Oath

Being admitted to the profession of veterinary medicine, I solemnly swear to use my scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society through the protection of animal health, the relief of animal suffering, the conservation of animal resources, the promotion of public health, and the advancement of medical knowledge.

I will practice my profession conscientiously, with dignity, and in keeping with the principles of veterinary medical ethics.

I accept as a lifelong obligation the continual improvement of my professional knowledge and competence.