

## **Sunday Column – The Perfect Home For publication 8.14.16**

The Pet Coalition of Muscogee and Harris Counties ran our first fee-waived adoption event last weekend. With 60 large breed dogs adopted in two days we have declared our experiment a success and have already scheduled the next event.

Fee-waived adoptions are controversial among animal welfare workers, and others for that matter. But then so is euthanasia, and that is what too many large breed dogs are facing in the summer months when they stay in animal control facilities too long.

Desperate times call for desperate measures and we decided as a group that we had to move these dogs out so we could bring more in. Best Friends Animal Society thought this was such a good idea that they covered the adoption fee.

Four years ago, when I was just a baby animal welfare worker I would have cringed at the idea of fee-waived adoptions. However, I've been willing to watch and learn from my more seasoned peers and they are pulling out all the stops. Really, what has anyone got to lose?

Animals sitting in animal control facilities have a terminal disease called the state-mandated 5-day stray hold. At the end of day 5 the shelter "owns" the animal and if they are out of space then that animal is out of time. During the summer months we cannot pull them fast enough. It's a senseless and tragic loss of life.

Studies show that whether you shell out extravagant sums of money or pay nothing at all you will still love and care for your new pet just the same. So it's not about the money which kinda makes sense, to me at least. We're not talking about a new pair of shoes, a car or living room furniture. Our pets are family members no matter how they come into our lives.

Fee or no fee, each coalition member used the same adoption policies and procedures we use when we adopt out of our own facilities. We can and do decline potential adopters when we feel it is appropriate.

Shelters and rescue groups have been known to go to great lengths to ensure each animal goes into a "good home." Lengthy applications, waiting periods, home checks, calls to landlords and veterinarians are just a short list of the hurdles to adoption. Honestly, who has time for all this? Animal welfare organizations tend to be grossly under resourced and do not have the manpower to pull this off.

In 2003, a group of industry leaders came to consensus about what constitutes a good adoption. The 5 Freedoms (a set of guidelines for animal care) figured heavily in the discussions. This is the criteria they decided had to be met for an adoption to be approved:

- Pet must be spayed or neutered prior to adoption

- No known history of animal abuse
- Must not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol during the adoption process
- The animal is not intended to be used as a food source

That's about as basic as it can get and I tend to agree that it doesn't need to be much more complicated than this.

Let's face it. There is no perfect home. We all just do our best, with the resources and knowledge we have. It surely beats the alternative.

*Bobbi Yeo lives in Opelika, AL. She is the CEO of PAWS Humane in Columbus, GA, an animal shelter and veterinary clinic offering low-cost spay/neuter and other services to the public. Email her at [byeo@pawshumane.org](mailto:byeo@pawshumane.org) with your comments and story ideas.*