



Choosing and Caring for Your Pet

MARTHA SPEAKS and The Humane Society of the United States celebrate the great work done by animal shelters around the country, encourage people to support local shelters, and help people choose and care for pets responsibly.

On MARTHA SPEAKS, Martha is a shelter dog who is adopted by Helen and her family, but the real Martha was a stray taken in by Susan Meddaugh. The real-life Martha inspired Susan to write the Martha Speaks book series. “What if we hadn’t adopted Martha? We would miss so much!” Susan says, “And it makes me sad to think of all the dogs in shelters, and all the love and surprises they could bring to a forever home of their own.” Many MARTHA SPEAKS episodes incorporate information on how to treat animals humanely and support animal shelters.

Shelters can always use donations of money and supplies, as well as volunteers. Check with your local shelter to find out what they need.

A New Pet in the Family?

Make sure you’re really ready to add a pet to your family. Think about what kind of pet that’s best for you, whether or not you have the time to give a pet the care and attention he or she needs, and be sure you can afford it.

The very best thing you can do for your local shelter is to choose one of the many pets they have who are looking for a home. Most shelters have both purebreds and mixed breeds of cats and dogs. They may also have other pets, such as rabbits, hamsters and guinea pigs. Just because an animal is in a shelter, it doesn’t mean there is anything wrong with him or her. A pet may have gotten lost and the owner couldn’t be found, or a family may have become unable to care for their pet. So before you buy a new pet, check with your local shelter—the pet you’re looking for may already be there, looking for you!

Be a Responsible Pet Owner

These simple tips will help you take good care of your pet.

- Have your pet spayed or neutered to prevent unwanted litters. Your pet will have a longer, healthier life too!
- Keep a collar and ID tags on your pet at all times, and have your pet microchipped for more permanent identification.

- Your pets should live in your house, with the rest of the family. Don't let pets roam outside alone—they can get lost or injured. Walk your dog on a leash or let him or her out in a fenced yard (never leave dogs chained in a yard). Cats are safer staying indoors, although they may be able to learn to wear a harness to go outside with you.
- If your pet does get lost, call or visit your local shelter immediately to get advice on how to find him or her.
- Take your pet to a veterinarian at least once a year for a checkup. Always visit the vet right away if your pet becomes ill or injured, or if your pet starts acting abnormally (for example, if your cat stops using the litter box). The veterinarian will also advise you on the best food, exercise, and care for your pet.

To learn more, visit www.humanesociety.org/animal_community/resources/.

