

At one shelter advertising on the web, a large mixed breed dog is available for adoption. He came into the shelter as a stray at the age of one year, and is still awaiting a home at the age of ten. What has been his quality of life? Has it been humane to keep this dog alive in a kennel for nine years?

Dogs live in the moment. That is one of the best qualities about a dog, their spontaneity, their in the moment zest for life. Dogs can neither dwell over the past or daydream of a better future. They simply live in the moment. Is it humane if, each day, a shelter dog bounds and re-bounds off the walls of his kennels, or spins in his own excrement, while WE, his caretakers daydream of a better future for him in a home?

Shelters/kennels are physically and architecturally designed to hold lots of dogs for short periods, not lots of dogs for long periods or interminably. And longer periods we are keeping dogs alive, particularly at no-kill shelters. We may have agreed not to euthanize, but what provisions have been put in place to make sure the dogs remain SANE? Has anyone proclaimed the minimum requirements for the emotional well-being of shelter dogs?

And what exactly does "no-kill" mean? Does it mean, let all the animals remain alive, regardless of physical pain, suffering, injury, disease, aggression, severe separation anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorders, stereotypies, until a natural death occurs? Does it mean "adoptable" dog remains alive indefinitely, no matter how the dog adjusts to long-term shelter life, until either a natural death or an adoption occurs? Does "no-kill" mean euthanize only "unadoptable" dogs? And how exactly is that defined? What behaviours or physical ailments make a dog "unadoptable"?

Aren't we responsible for more than just the dogs' physical health, nutritional requirements, fresh water and a clean, sterile kennel? How many leash walks a day should be the minimum requirement for dogs in shelters? What about petting? Should there be a "touch" or "stroking" daily requirement? What about toys? Bedding? Quality of life standards should have been determined before a shelter decides not to euthanize.

Euthanasia is a controversial subject, and a highly emotional one. I believe it is criminal to euthanize a temperamentally adoptable dog due to lack of space, time or money. But after travelling to shelters all across the country for the past seven years, I firmly believe not one temperamentally adoptable dog would need to be killed because of a lack of space or time. Too many shelters are holding aggressive and dangerous dog interminably, while just around the corner another shelter euthanizes dozens of highly adoptable dogs for lack of cage space.

Also, most shelters do not evaluate the temperament of their dogs at all, or they do a cursory evaluation during the incoming medical exam. Many dogs, who, in the kennels, "seem" friendly and nice, are given no further evaluation or handling. In my experience, it is extremely difficult to assess the true nature of a dog in a kennel setting without getting him out and performing a few simple behavioural evaluations. Seemingly "sweet" and "friendly" dogs can sometimes be quite dominant-ag-

gressive when handled or pushed to do something they don't want to do. The shelter is a false living situation, with minimal human contact. So, some seemingly adoptable shelter dogs are taking up kennel space while truly adoptable dogs are euthanized for lack of space and time.

There are two questions to be asked of every dog awaiting adoption in every kennel in every shelter in this country. The questions deal with the two most important issues pertaining to euthanasia: quality of life and behavioural adoptability. The questions on the surface may sound similar, but are actually quite different.

1. Is this dog a better dog, behaviourally, mentally, and emotionally, today, than he was yesterday?
2. Is this dog a better dog, behaviourally, mentally, and emotionally, today, than, he was the day he came in?

If the answer is not "yes" to both questions, I believe the dog is better off euthanized. And I don't believe the decision hinges on an opinion, a policy, emotions, or feelings about euthanasia. The decision is made in the best interest of the dog. He is living in the present. It is a human's responsibility to make sure the dog is not living in what the dog would consider hell. It is selfish to keep a dog alive if he has deteriorated emotionally or behaviourally, or his mental health is gone. It is unfair to give the public a dangerous dog or one who will be a behavioural nightmare for life.

Euthanasia is a powerful and profoundly disturbing event. I have been assisting with, performing, injecting, holding, comforting and making decisions so others can euthanize since I was 18 years old. I find it no easier to fathom and experience today than I did when I was 18. And yet, in over 20 years of working with shelters of all kinds in all parts of the country, I have found that dogs living out a hellish existence in shelters in the hope of an eventual adoption is a much more powerful and profoundly disturbing event for me.

Join Anti-Fur Demo "No more sacrifices for fashion"

Many animals such as rabbits, dogs and cats are killed in a brutal manner for their fur in order to decorate us. Please join us in a walk down Mido-suji in Osaka to protest against this trade.

Date: October 21st, 2007 (Sun) starts at 1 p.m.

Place: Hori Park

For more details, please see the site below:

<http://www.geocities.jp/kabasannoheya/nofur.htm>

Contact: Ms. Nishikaze at NO FUR Osaka (090-9889-7063)

毛皮反対デモ「ファッションのために命の犠牲はイライナイ」参加者募集

首周りのふわふわショールやブーツの飾りに使われている「毛皮=ファー」。それは価格を下げるために残酷な方法で殺されたウサギ、アザラシ、そして犬や猫の毛皮です。毛皮にされる動物達のため、大阪・御堂筋を一緒に歩いて下さい!

日時: 2007年10月21日(日) 午後1時 堀江公園集合(予定)

詳細は、イベントホームページをご覧ください。

<http://www.geocities.jp/kabasannoheya/nofur.htm>

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