

Humane Society of Elmore County – Who Are We?

The Humane Society of Elmore County is a private, non-profit, 501(c)(3), humane shelter whose doors opened in October of 1993 after tremendous work by a very dedicated and tenacious group of concerned citizens. We are a sheltering facility located in Wetumpka for approximately 5000 animals brought to us each year by citizens and government animal control entities from throughout Elmore County and we are here to support the municipalities, citizens and animals throughout Elmore County. We receive about 25% of our operational funds from those government agencies with which we have contractual agreements and we get the other 75% from donations and fund raising activities.

So what do we do on a daily basis? Our doors open at 8 am Mon-Sat to receive animals. After getting all of the animals fed and their holding areas cleaned, we open for adoptions at 10 am. We take any animal brought through our doors with only one exception – in accordance with Alabama state law, if an animal has bitten a human in the past ten days it must go to a licensed veterinarian for quarantine and/or testing, and since we do not have a veterinarian on staff we do not accept those animals. Once an animal is brought to us as a stray we will hold that animal for seven days in hopes an owner will show up to claim it. If the animal has a rabies or identification tag we immediately call to try and locate the owner and we scan every animal for a microchip as our hopes are to reunite a lost pet with their owner as soon as possible. When the owner has identified an animal as theirs, they will have to pay a pick-up fee if brought in by an Animal Control agent, a \$10/day board fee and a \$10 Rabies vaccination fee if the owner cannot provide proof of a current Rabies vaccination. After the seven days or if an animal has been owner surrendered to us (meaning no holding period is required) we will evaluate that animal for its adoption potential. Animals that are vicious, diseased or feral are not put up for adoption and are humanely euthanized. For those other animals that could make a wonderful pet for a family, every effort is made to find that animal an appropriate home. Once an animal is up for adoption there is no set time for how long we keep that animal as that is completely dependent on the animal, space and resource limitations and the number of animals coming in our front door.

During an animal's time with us it receives shelter, food/water/treats, immunizations, deworming, baths, other medical treatment as necessary, behavioral evaluation, playtime and lots of love. The sad fact is that with 5000 animals being turned in to our shelter each year there simply aren't enough homes for all of them and we do have to euthanize animals to make space for the many others that just keep coming. We do our euthanasia via injection of Sodium Pentobarbital which is considered the most humane method by the American Veterinary Medical Association, the Humane Society of the United States and the Alabama State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners.

You might ask why it is that 5000 animals come through our shelter each year. There are two main reasons – failure to spay and neuter animals to stop unwanted and unneeded litters of puppies and kittens, and a lack of responsible pet ownership to commit to that animal for its lifetime (I will talk more about these in future articles). Because of the nationwide surplus of unwanted animals, every animal adopted from us is adopted under a mandatory spay/neuter contract so that our animals are not contributing to the overpopulation crisis.

What else do we do? We provide education throughout the county and love addressing school groups and any other group wanting us to come talk about Responsible Pet Ownership, safety around animals and various other topics. We work with law enforcement agencies on cases involving cruelty to animals which can also entail cruelty neglect by the owner. Volunteers take puppies and kittens to visit local nursing homes each week and we try to educate each person who calls or comes to see us.

What are our limitations? We do not come out to pick up animals as we have no authority to do such, but will put callers in touch with the appropriate animal control agency to help with the issue. We can investigate charges of inhumane treatment which can involve direct cruelty and/or neglect, but we don't have any legal authority to confiscate animals or arrest people for animal cruelty – we must work with the applicable law enforcement and upon court order provide shelter to animals pending court cases.

While we strive for homes for all of our adoptable animals, we only adopt our animals when it is a good fit for the potential new owner and the animal. Our hope for an animal being adopted from us is a loving and lifetime home where that animal is kept healthy and safe and is treated as a member of the family its entire life.

We are a shelter for domesticated animals, which means we are not a licensed wildlife rehabilitation center. In the event we have an exotic or native wild animal left at our shelter we contact the appropriate agencies to help us with that animal.

So, what does it take to do all we do each and every day? Foremost is funding since it takes those funds to pay the staff payroll, the utilities, vaccinations, spay/neuter bills, facility operations and upkeep, etc., etc. Volunteer help is vital as it can make all the difference for the animals and daily operations. And absolutely critical is the wonderful support we receive from all of the veterinarians in the tri-county area who honor our spay/neuter certificates and health exams for our adopted animals. Their support helps ensure the health of our adopted pets, helps educate owners about responsible pet ownership and helps us do our part to stem pet overpopulation.

The Humane Society of Elmore County is here to help not only the animals in our county, but its citizens as well. If you find a lost animal, or one that has been thrown out by someone (a crime under the cruelty laws in Alabama) bring it to us so we can try to reunite it or find it a better home. If you have a pet you feel you can't keep we would like to help you solve whatever challenge you may be having before you have to bring that pet to us, but we will accept your pet if you choose to surrender it.

And for all those with unaltered animals we beg you to please have them spayed or neutered so they don't contribute to the crisis of pet overpopulation so that one day we will no longer have to euthanize perfectly adoptable dogs or cats in Elmore County and across the nation.

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