

# Arguments for adopting pets



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“ Adopt, do not buy!” The most common phrase when someone does research as to whether they are going to adopt from a shelter or buy from a breeder when bringing in a new family pet. There are pros and cons to each side, and fair reasons as to why someone could go either way. It is really all a preference of what a family is looking for when it comes to a dog they bring into their home, whether living alone or having small children. There is a lot of history as to why people fight for shelter adoptions instead of breeder or store purchases. Either route taken, with patience and hard work, one can create an experience and a permanent furry friendship that is worth it in the end.

When researching whether to adopt or purchase, here are some facts one will find regarding adoption. Every year there are about 7.6 million animals that enter into the humane shelters. Of these animals, 3.9 million are dogs whereas 3.7 million are cats. “ According to the American Humane Association, the most common reasons why people relinquish or give away their dogs are because their place of residence does not allow pets (29%), not enough time, divorce/death and behavior issues (10% each). The most common reasons for cats is that they were not allowed in the residence (21%) and allergies (11%).” (Humane Society Central Texas) With the high number of animals that are coming into the humane shelter, there is an overpopulation. Many shelters are hitting their maximum capacity and have to turn people away.

The 7.6 million animals that reside in a shelter are dispersed among about 13,600 shelters across the United States of America. “ About 710,000 animals who enter shelters as strays are returned to their owners. Of those,

620, 000 are dogs and only 90, 000 are cats.” (ASPCA). Out of the large number of animals entering the humane shelter about 3. 2 million of those animals get adopted out every year. From the number adopted out, 6 percent of those animals are returned, not including those personally rehomed or even abandoned by their owners. When considering adding a new family pet, it is always important to consider whether or not the pet is going to be able to have a long term placement in the home. These decisions should not be made spontaneously.

When an animal is adopted from a shelter, there could be a whole host of illnesses that are unknown for the pet and can create many issues for the owners in the end. One woman says that she will never adopt from a shelter again. She decided to get her little dog, Mookie, a companion so he was not alone during the day while she was at work. His new buddy, Yogi, was diagnosed with cancer just six months later. He was only meant to live for about a year, but little Yogi defied the odds, and lived three more years before he passed away. A little while later, she adopted a new dog. “ Clarence looked like Yogi, but the only thing they had in common was a penchant for serious health issues. I kept telling myself that at least Clarence didn’t have cancer, but his problems were almost worse. His epilepsy was difficult to control, and the phenobarbital he took to subdue his seizures caused weight gain, liver deterioration, and anxiety. I got tired of veterinary specialists focusing on the fact that he was fat rather than helping me figure out how to get the dog to sleep at night.” (Erin Auerbach) This was her second dog she adopted from the shelter. Not knowing the breed or possible issues can cause great financial and emotional burdens. Little Clarence

ended up suffering from seizures and the only relief for his pain was to put him down. Mookie was the only one left, and he ended up suffering the same fate as Clarence about a decade into his time with his adopted owner.

Adopting from a shelter can be difficult because of the unknown history of the animal, and may cause a person financial burdens and worry that he or she was not expecting. Like many though, Erin put a lot of her time and money into her fur babies because she cared.

Many families want a four legged furry companion in their lives, but the price to be able to have a young puppy are outrageously high if searching for a specific breed from a breeder, especially for a lower class working family. Going to a shelter has a large range of fur companions to choose from to adopt and love for a lower cost. Going about it this way gets dogs and cats off the streets and keeps them from euthanization that awaits them in a kill shelter. These shelter animals could have a damaged past. Why is this a good reason as to why adopting from a shelter is better? “ Dogs and cats, just like humans, can be damaged from past experiences. It makes us who we are, for better or worse. People with difficult life experiences can find the greatest bond and compassion in animals that have, unfortunately, experienced a similar difficult past.” (Casual Furiday). Just because an animal has a damaged past and broken heart does not mean they can not love just as we do. If an adopted animal is shown love, patience, and a lot of time is taken out to train him, then he could very well be the sweetest animal a person has ever owned.

Some shelter dogs can be very loving and sweet but their temperament is unpredictable not knowing their past or even their breed make-up. “ In fact,

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over 20% of dogs that are brought to shelters were adopted from a shelter.” (Ashley Hoffman). So why not go for a breeder. The specific genetic make-up of the dog will be known, as well as their temperament, and even the possible health issues that could occur at any moment of time in the future. “ Since you'll be sure what breed of dog you are purchasing, you'll know exactly what to expect with medical expenses” (Ashley Hoffman). With adoption or purchase from a breeder, it is easier to plan ahead of what the possible health risks could be since the specific breed is known. These possible issues could occur or never occur at all. This is if the breeder gives an accurate account of the possible or known health issues when purchasing. Some breeders are not honest, they are just out to sell puppies to make money.

Shelter adoptions of animals help bring down the animal population. “ Each year, approximately 1. 5 million shelter animals are euthanized (670, 000 dogs and 860, 000 cats)” (ASPCA). One more adopted into a loving family means one less animal euthanized that year. In a personal experience, my in-laws adopted a beautiful Chesapeake Bay retriever, she is about four months old. They purchased the dog from a breeder for only three hundred dollars. Cheap, right? The poor girl had only been in her new home for a short while and there were some noticeable health issues that arose quickly. It was discovered she has a rare disorder known as Megaesophagus. “ Megaesophagus is not a single disease. Instead it is considered a combination disorder in which the esophagus (the tube that carries food and liquid between the mouth and stomach) dilates and loses motility (its ability to move food into the stomach). When esophageal motility is decreased or

absent, food and liquid accumulate in the esophagus.” (Robin Downing). The animal is unable to eat normally because the esophagus does not close properly. This disorder is known at a young age, but the breeder decided to put this problem onto a teenage girl and cause a lot of distress. This is a case of a dishonest breeder whose purpose is to make money, not breed well bred dogs. Breeders like this give all the well certified ones a bad name. They ended up having to rehome her to a special rescue where they would have the proper ability to care for her. Situations such as this create the argument in “adopt, don’t shop.” In this case, adopting from a shelter could have been a better choice for the owner. She would be giving a lost dog a new loving home, but also knows that there could be a chance of some health issue arising, even though the specifics of the breed are unknown.

Adoption from a shelter can be just as discouraging if the shelter is not honest regarding their animals also. Adoption from a shelter is hard, older aged dogs are harder to train and make sure they can fit into your lifestyle, no matter what it may be. They could start off alright and then suddenly turn aggressive with a single trigger. “I knew he'd be a fixer-upper and that it'd be worth it to save a life seeing as he hasn't had one thus far, but I feel like I'm in over my head.” (cmcgee21, phpBB). Adopting a shelter dog can be stressful and more work than what someone originally thinks he or she is getting into. The shelter had told her that he was okay besides some food protectiveness. “He now lunges and barks at every single dog that walks down the street. He chases dogs around the dog park and corners them with non-stop growling and barking.” (cmcgee21, phpBB). Because of him never leaving the house and getting no socialization, it has greatly impacted more

than what the shelter had lead on. They put the problem on someone else and were not honest regarding the behavior. Honesty is important whether a person decides to adopt or buy from a breeder.

Because of dishonesty and their unknown history, they should almost be on a continuous watch until they have made it through the adjustment period. This includes any animal whether adopted or purchased from a breeder. “ You can gauge the time it might take for your dog to fully acclimate to his home in threes: three days, three weeks, three months” (Drs. London and McConnell). The first three days can be known as a “ detox period” this is the transitional period from shelter to home. A home is a lot quieter than a shelter and there are a lot more stimulants and toys instead of just the cement kennel. After three weeks, they should start getting used to the owner coming and going, start learning the routine, and when food and potty times are. Three months into coming home from the shelter, the dog will start to feel as if he is home. It is a process, but with the right tools, behavior plan, and patience it will be worth it in the end to have a long life furry friend.

Whether someone decides to adopt from a shelter or adopt from a breeder, there are always going to be issues. Adopting from a shelter gives you a pet who can create an inseparable bond, it saves an animal from the fate of euthanization, and provides a loving bond as long as he or she is given a chance. Shelter animals deserve to have the love that people share with their breeder-purchased pets as well as given a chance because it will be worth it in the end.

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