

Finding a Home for Kitty

Where to go if you cannot care for your cat or have found a stray

Each year in the U.S., about 4 million homeless dogs, cats and other pets are euthanized in shelters. In Michigan alone, more than 60,000 cats and kittens are euthanized each year (only includes shelters reporting euthanasia rates to the State of Michigan). Some shelters euthanize 75% or more of the cats that are in their care.

The sad reality is, many animal shelters are overcrowded and have to make room for more animals to come in. This unfortunate pattern gets repeated over and over again.

If you have a cat that you can no longer care for – or if you have found a stray cat or kitten – you have a number of options before surrendering the pet to an animal shelter. Please consider:

1. Try every way possible to keep the cat.

Even though cats often live 20 years or more, many people favor younger cats or kittens. If your cat is more than 5-6 years old, his/her chances of getting adopted are not as good as for younger cats. Think about what you can do to keep your cat or give a home to a homeless stray. If you need assistance, there is help available for:

- Pet food -- Find pet food pantries around Michigan at http://www.petco.com/petco_Page_PC_foundationfoodbank.aspx
- Veterinary care – Many low-cost spay/neuter clinics not only offer sterilization, but often provide low-cost vaccines. For a list of Michigan clinics, go to <http://www.nootersclub.org/lowcostspayneuter.htm>
Also ask your veterinarian about payment plans such as those offered through Care Credit. Some veterinary practices also maintain special funds for pets in need.
- Pet peace at home -- Ask your veterinarian for advice in helping pets get along with each other. Or go to http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/cats/tips/introducing_new_cat.html
<http://www.aspcbehavior.org/articles/26/Introducing-Your-Cat-to-a-New-Cat.aspx>
- Socializing pets – If you have a stray cat that needs some TLC, get socializing tips at <http://www.bestfriends.org/nomorehomelesspets/pdf/CatSocialization.pdf>

2. Get your cat spayed/neutered and health checked.

If you have made up your mind that you cannot keep your cat, make sure that your cat is spayed (female) or neutered (male) and has had a recent wellness exam. This will make it easier to find another home. See number 1 above for low-cost spay/neuter clinics if you need assistance.

3. Ask friends, family, neighbors and co-workers.

Your best option for finding a new home for your cat is among the people you know. But first, put together information that will show them how wonderful your cat is – include:

- Great photo – a must! Video - even better!
- Description – what they will love about your kitty: what makes kitty special, cute traits, playtime habits!
- Health/veterinary care.

Email this to everyone you can think of in your contact list – and ask them to forward it to others!

4. Contact local pet supplies stores.

Many of the large pet supplies chains have in-store pet adoption areas. Call or visit your local stores to see if they are willing to put your cat up for adoption. (Many of them work directly with outside rescue groups, so don't be surprised if you are referred to one of them.) NEVER show up and expect the store to take your pet; ALWAYS contact the manager beforehand.

5. Contact no-kill rescue groups.

There are numerous rescue groups that are run by volunteers usually operating foster care networks out of their homes. A great place to find the ones in your area is go to www.petfinder.com and enter your zip code just like you are looking for a pet. The local groups will be listed along with their contact info. But be patient if you don't get a call back right away; the volunteers are often busy caring for foster pets. You may have to contact multiple groups; also be willing to offer donations of pet food, money or supplies to help with the cat's care.

6. A shelter should be your last choice.

As mentioned earlier, most shelters are already overcrowded. If that is your only option, research those with low animal kill rates. Find adoption and kill rates for the State of Michigan at http://www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,1607,7-125-1569_16979_21260---,00.html

7. Finally

NEVER, EVER just leave your pet at any of the above places without going through the regular surrender process. Not only is it cruel and inhumane to abandon a pet. It is against the law.