

Eight Reasons Shelter Dogs Make Wonderful Pets

Each year, it's estimated that more than one million adoptable dogs and cats are euthanized in the United States, simply because too many pets come into shelters and too few people consider adoption when looking for a pet.

The number of euthanized animals could be reduced dramatically if more people adopted pets instead of buying them. When you adopt, you save a loving animal by making them part of your family and open up shelter space for another animal who might desperately need it.

Some people may hesitate to bring home a dog from a shelter, somehow suspecting that it will be inferior to one bought from a reputable pet shop or breeder — or that their choices will be limited to mixed breed “mutts.”

But there are several advantages to mixed breed dogs: They're unique (your pooch won't look like anybody else's), they tend to have fewer health issues than purebreds, and they may also have more even temperaments than some high-strung thoroughbreds and therefore can be better around kids.

If you insist on a purebred dog, however, shelters are full of them, too. According to the dog and cat data site PetBreeds, the dogs most commonly available for adoption from shelters are (in descending order): the American pit bull terrier, the chihuahua, the Labrador retriever, and the German shepherd. Your chances of finding boxers, beagles, and dachshunds are pretty good, too.

Here are eight reasons why shelter dogs make wonderful pets:

Because you'll save a life.

Adopting a dog will save that animal's life, but the act can also save more than one animal. With millions of companion animals entering U.S. shelters every year, adopting helps make room for another animal. Your act will also help shelters to continue doing great work and may encourage someone else to save a shelter pet.

Animal shelters and rescue groups are brimming with happy, healthy pets just waiting for someone to take them home. Most shelter dogs wound up there because of a human problem like a move, divorce, a lost job, or financial problems, not because the animals did anything wrong. Many are already house-trained and used to living with families. Whether it is an older dog, a mixed breed, or one with a sad past, it deserves a second chance and a loving home.

Once in a good home, these dogs can go through an amazing emotional and physical transformation. With some grooming, medical care, training, routine, a secure and stable environment, and of course love, shelter dogs can make amazing recoveries. And there is plenty of evidence online and on social media showing these transformations and happy adoption stories.

Because you can adopt a dog of any age.

Puppies are adorable, but that also means lots of training and endless patience. Puppies can take around four to six months to be fully house trained, with some taking up to a year. In addition to having accidents in the house, they can come with destructive behavior such as chewing, digging, jumping on people and climbing on furniture.

With a shelter dog, you can skip some or all of this training by adopting an older pet. This doesn't mean that a shelter dog won't need additional training, but the process can be easier than with a puppy. Senior or older dogs, usually considered seven years or older, are some of the most difficult to place, even though most will have years of healthy life ahead of them.

There are many good reasons to adopt an older dog. These mature dogs have advantages, such as being house-trained, and are generally calmer and easier for older people or people with hectic lives. They can also be more predictable than puppies. Puppies may be energetic and seem full of endless love, but older dogs can be just as lovable. Their emotional maturity is an advantage, and even though they have a past, they can bond with you just as much as puppies.

Because you can find a better match for you and your family.

Some dog owners may recognize the right pet for them as soon as they've laid eyes on it, but it's important to make sure owners and dogs are properly matched. The right pairing is more likely when adopting a dog rather than buying one, as shelters consider needs such as temperament, energy level, home environment, and more. Unlike pet stores, profit is not a factor at shelters, and the best interests of the owners and animals are put first.

Dogs unfortunately don't come with instruction manuals. But the next best thing is the shelter from which you adopted your dog. The employees and volunteers can be a great ongoing source of information and resources for your pet. The shelter can also offer or recommend services such as veterinary care and behavior training.

Because it will reduce your costs.

Adopting a dog usually involves a fee, but this fee is a fraction of the cost of buying a dog from a pet store or a breeder. Shelters also cover other costs that may be extra elsewhere. These covered costs can include spaying or neutering, vaccinations, microchipping, and even training expenses.

Because you'll help to combat puppy mills.

If you purchase a dog from a pet store, breeder, or online seller, you may be at risk of supporting a puppy mill. Puppy mills are more concerned with profit than an animal's well-being and have been cited for inhumane conditions and medical care issues. With the right research, you can find a breeder that doesn't support puppy mills, but adopting a shelter dog is a guaranteed and easier way to combat the practice.

Potential adoptees may have heard that shelter dogs are prone to more health issues, but this is usually not the case and shouldn't stop you from adopting. Buying dogs from a pet store, especially if they are from puppy mills, can come with far more risks for health problems. Shelter dogs go through full physical exams, and many shelters have vets to treat medical issues. The

shelters will also make sure that the pets are up to date on their shots and neutered or spayed before coming home with you — something that some breeders may not do.

Because you'll help prevent pet overpopulation.

About 3.3 million dogs enter shelters each year and approximately 20 percent of them have to be euthanized. These numbers are declining, however, with help from increased adoptions. Adopting a dog not only helps prevent overpopulation in shelters, but also helps control the overall dog population through spaying and neutering.

Because you'll send a positive message.

There are plenty of reasons to bring a dog into your life, but whatever the reason, you can send a positive message by adopting a shelter dog. By doing so, you can help educate others about the benefits of adopting shelter pets, promote awareness of puppy mills and dog overpopulation, and encourage others to save a dog's life by adopting.

Because you'll change a homeless dog's whole world.

A shelter dog appreciates a home like no other dog. Yes, every dog loves its parents, but shelter dogs know what it's like to be homeless. Now that they have a good thing going with your family, they have a unique and strong appreciation for the love you give. The bond you have with a shelter dog is truly special.

Submitted by Kris Letterman

Sources: Cristabelle Tumola, Humane Society of the United States, Holly Van Hare

One final note from Kris Letterman: I am a volunteer dog walker at Pima Animal Care Center (PACC). During the worst of the Covid epidemic, the number of dogs in the shelter went down dramatically, as people fostered or adopted dogs in record numbers. But that trend has now reversed at PACC. Recently, there were 225 dogs in the shelter, and many more in foster care that are available for adoption. And the numbers are still going up.

Please don't give up if you don't find your new best friend on your first visit. Check the website and/or visit the shelter often for new arrivals. The PACC staff and volunteers are quite knowledgeable about the available dogs and are there to help. Your perfect dog is there waiting for you....I guarantee it.

Interested in adopting a shelter dog? Check out the following local shelters:

https://webcms.pima.gov/government/pima_animal_care_center/

(Scroll down page and click on Adopt a Pet. Then click on Dogs in Shelter and Dogs in Foster)

<https://www.pinalcountyz.gov/AnimalControl/Pages/AdoptAPet.aspx>

And once you've decided to adopt your new best friend, be sure to read this:

<https://www.rescuedogs101.com/bringing-new-dog-home-3-3-3-rule/#3-3-3-rule>