



For immediate release

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Resolve to Be Responsible

AARF urges the community to learn more about good pet ownership in 2007

Here's one New Year's resolution that can really make a difference. Atlanta Animal Rescue Friends Inc. (AARF) operates several innovative programs aimed at educating the community about responsible pet ownership. AARF also offers a plethora of information and a works with network of experts to answer questions about how to be a more responsible steward of animals.

Consider some of the key components of responsible pet ownership:

1) Spaying or Neutering

Here are just a few reasons you should spay or neuter your pet:

- 70,000 puppies and kittens are born every day in the US. Compared to only 10,000 human births, it's clear that there will never be enough homes for all these animals.
- Neutered pets are less likely to run away or get into fights.
- A spayed female has a much lower risk of breast, uterine and ovarian cancer. A neutered male is much less likely to develop testicular and prostate cancer.
- An estimated 6 to 8 million dogs and cats are euthanized in shelters in this country every year. Millions more are abandoned, only to suffer on the streets from illness or injury before dying.

Casper's Fund, a program offered by AARF, provides free and subsidized spays or neuters to metro Atlanta residents in exchange for volunteer hours. The program also assists participants in obtaining vaccinations and tests at a reduced cost. For more information, please visit www.caspersfund.org.

2) Health Care

Did you know that dogs and cats need annual dental exams starting at 5 years old in order to maintain good health? Tartar in the mouth can be a sign of chronic bacterial infection or long-term abscess, and bacteria can get to other parts of the body (heart, kidneys, liver). There may be a lot more you don't know about maintaining your pet's good health. Make sure you have a good relationship with a reputable veterinarian, and that you talk to him or her about the best ways to keep your pet healthy.

3) Training

When done appropriately, training enriches the dog's world, prevents the dog from living in perpetual confusion and deepens the relationship with the owner. The great side effect is that the dog also learns useful, practical behaviors that make it better company for people. Training also can help a rescued dog emerge confidently from the fear and confusion of past abuse by learning how to be successful. Visit www.aarfatlanta.org for links to more training information.

4) Emergency Care

In the event of a disaster, if you must evacuate, the most important thing you can do to protect your pets is to evacuate them, too. Leaving pets behind, even if you try to create a safe place for them, is likely to result in their being injured, lost, or worse. Be sure to communicate with friends, relatives, or others outside the affected area about whether they could shelter your animals if needed, and prepare a list of boarding facilities and veterinarians who could shelter animals in an emergency. Also, make sure to keep on hand information on feeding schedules, medical conditions, behavior problems, and the name and number of your veterinarian.

5) Teaching Others

You can help paint a brighter picture for animals by spreading the word about responsible pet ownership and the resources available through groups like AARF. AARF's Kids N Kritters program focuses on teaching the next generation of pet owners responsibility as the key to ending the problems of pet overpopulation and cruelty toward animals. Through fun, educational, hands-on activities, the program encourages kids to start thinking about the impact they can have on animal welfare. For more information, visit www.kids-n-kritters.org.

Atlanta Animal Rescue Friends Inc. (AARF), founded in 2002, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit animal welfare organization licensed by the state of Georgia. AARF is run solely on adoption fees, private donations and charitable grants, without government support. All donations are tax-deductible. For more information, visit www.aarfatlanta.org or call (678) 318-1886.