

The following letter was posted in the "Best of Craigslist" in August 2006.

(Craigslist is a well-known global network of online communities, featuring forums sorted by various topics.)

Shelter Manager's Thankless Job

I am posting this (and it is long) because I think our society needs a huge “wake up!” call.

As a shelter manager, I am going to share a little insight with you all . . . a view from the inside, if you will.

First off, this is a forum to for adoption and / or rehoming, as clearly stated in the rules.

All of you breeders / sellers on Craigslist should not only be flagged (and I hope the good people on Craigslist will continue to do so with blind fury), but you should be made to work in the ‘back’ of an animal shelter for just one day.

Maybe if you saw the life drain from a few sad, lost, confused eyes, you would change your mind about breeding and selling to people you don't even know. That puppy you just sold will most likely end up in my shelter when it's not a cute little puppy anymore.

So how would you feel if you knew that there's about a 90% chance that dog will never walk out of the shelter it is going to be dumped at? Purebred or not! About 50% of all of the dogs that are ‘owner surrenders’ or ‘strays’, that come into my shelter are purebred dogs.

The most common excuses I hear are:

- *"We are moving and we can't take our dog (or cat)."*
Really? Where are you moving to that doesn't allow pets?
- Or they say: *"The dog got bigger than we thought it would."*
How big did you think a German Shepherd would get?
- *"We don't have time for her."*
Really? I work a 10-12 hour day and still have time for my 6 dogs!
- *"She's tearing up our yard."*
How about making her a part of your family?
- They always tell me: *"We just don't want to have to stress about finding a place for her. We know she'll get adopted, she's a good dog."*

Odds are your pet won't get adopted and how stressful do you think being in a shelter is?

Well, let me tell you your pet has 72 hours to find a new family from the moment you drop it off. Sometimes a little longer if the shelter isn't full and your dog manages to stay completely healthy. If it snuffles, it dies.

Your pet will be confined to a small run / kennel in a room with about 25 other barking or crying animals. It will have to relieve itself where it eats and sleeps.

It will be depressed and it will cry constantly for the family that abandoned it. If your pet is lucky, I will have enough volunteers in that day to take him / her for a walk. If I don't, your pet won't get any attention besides having a bowl of food slid under the kennel door and the waste sprayed out of its pen with a high-powered hose.

If your dog is big, black or any of the "Bully" breeds (pit bull, rottie, mastiff, etc) it was pretty much dead when you walked it through the front door. Those dogs just don't get adopted.

If your dog doesn't get adopted within its 72 hours and the shelter is full, it will be destroyed. If the shelter isn't full and your dog is good enough, and of a desirable enough breed, it may get a stay of execution. Not for long though. Most get very kennel protective after about a week and are destroyed for showing aggression. Even the sweetest dogs will turn in this environment.

If your pet makes it over all of those hurdles, chances are it will get kennel cough or an upper respiratory infection and will be destroyed because shelters just don't have the funds to pay for even a \$100 treatment.

Here's a little euthanasia 101 for those of you that have never witnessed a perfectly healthy, scared animal being "put down":

First, your pet will be taken from its kennel on a leash. They always look like they think they are going for a walk: happy, wagging their tails.

Until they get to "The Room". Every one of them freaks out and puts on the brakes when we get to the door. It must smell like death or they can feel the sad souls that are left in there. It's strange, but it happens with every one of them.

Your dog or cat will be restrained, held down by 1 or 2 vet techs depending on the size and how freaked out they are.

Then a euthanasia tech or a vet will start the process. They will find a vein in the front leg and inject a lethal dose of the "pink stuff". Hopefully your pet doesn't panic from being restrained and jerk. I've seen the needles tear out of a leg and been covered with the resulting blood and deafened by the yelps and screams.

They all don't just "go to sleep". They sometimes spasm for a while, gasp for air and defecate on themselves.

When it all ends, your pet's corpse will be stacked like firewood in a large freezer in the back with all of the other animals that were killed, waiting to be picked up like garbage.

What happens next? Cremated? Taken to the dump? Rendered into pet food?

You'll never know and it probably won't even cross your mind. It was just an animal and you can always buy another one, right?

I hope that those of you that have read this are bawling your eyes out and can't get the pictures out of your head. I do, everyday on the way home from work.

I hate my job, I hate that it exists and I hate that it will always be there unless you people make some changes and realise that the lives you are affecting go much farther than the pets you dump at a shelter.

Between 9 and 11 MILLION animals die every year in shelters and only you can stop it.

I do my best to save every life I can but rescues are always full, and there are more animals coming in every day than there are homes.

My point to all of this is:

DON'T BREED OR BUY WHILE SHELTER PETS DIE!

Hate me or flag me if you want to. The truth hurts and reality is what it is.

I just hope I maybe changed one person's mind about breeding from their dog, taking their loving pet to a shelter, or buying a dog.

I hope that someone will walk into my shelter and say: *"I saw this thing on Craigslist and it made me want adopt."* That would make it all worth it.