

Top Tips for Adopting Out Pets as Gifts



Who says shelters and rescues shouldn't adopt out pets as gifts? Not us! Based on the ASPCA's recent research, we're endorsing this policy as a way to save more animals' lives during the holiday season and beyond.

Want to give it a try? Check out these tried-and-true tips from three agencies who love the program.

Wisconsin Humane Society

Every holiday season the media reminds shoppers to avoid giving pets as gifts. The good news? This is a great opportunity to chip away at the myth, like Wisconsin Humane Society President Anne Reed did in a radio interview last holiday season. Here's some wisdom from Wisconsin:

- **Correct gently.** What if an interviewer starts off by asking why it's NOT a good idea to surprise someone with a puppy under the tree? Here's how Reed handled it: "Well, I'm going to take a little different approach. Sometimes surprises aren't the right idea; sometimes they *are* the right idea." Her response set a respectful, positive tone and made the listener want to learn more.
- **Share the research.** Studies done by the ASPCA and others have shown no correlation between getting an animal as a gift and an owner's love and attachment to the pet – even if that pet was a surprise gift – and no increased risk of relinquishment for dogs and cats received as gifts.
- **Share tips for gifts that are surprises.** Make sure adopters think about not just the specific care needs for the animal, but about the gift recipient and what would be most satisfying to them (*i.e. Grandma's older kitty died recently, but does that really mean she'd do best with a kitten?*).
- **Share tips for gifts that are not surprises.** Things can be pretty hectic over the holidays, and sometimes the best time to bring an animal home isn't holiday morning itself, but a week or so later when things calm down. There's also the option of involving the gift recipient in the adoption process. "When you bring your loved ones into the shelter to help choose the adoption," says Reed, "they get to have that special moment of falling in love."

Santa Fe Animal Shelter and Humane Society

Santa delivers pets to Santa Fe homes on Christmas Eve in a program that has been a mega PR success and has fostered a positive shelter image in the community. Here are some highlights from Santa Fe's program:

- **Take advantage of awesome photo ops.** You'll want pictures of Santa getting ready at the shelter, loading pets into the van and, of course, the delivery itself – the money shot is Santa on the doorstep with a family snuggling their new pet! Use the photos on social media and in press releases.



- **Follow your usual adoption process.** There's no need to change your procedure for adopters who plan to give the pet to a loved one. Once a pet is selected, make a note in your database with delivery time, location and contact info.
- **Extend the giving season.** Try this delivery program on any occasion where gifts are standard. Consider it for birthdays, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Valentine's Day – and don't forget to have fun with your flyers!

Charleston Animal Society

In Charleston, a new holiday tradition is being created – for the past two years CAS has made Christmas Eve and Christmas morning deliveries of adopted dogs and cats. CAS President Joe Elmore offers these gift-worthy tips.

- **Promote the program.** “Loved ones come in prior to Christmas, in response to our marketing promotions, to look for animals they feel would make good companions for the beneficiaries,” says Elmore. “Usually, folks come in the week prior to Christmas, but we've accepted commitments up to two weeks prior to Christmas.”
- **Show and tell.** Show the media and your community how special this lifesaving program is – consider asking a reporter to ride along on a Christmas morning delivery.
- **Recruit your elves.** Put out a call for volunteer elves – and make sure they know they'll dress the part – far in advance to build excitement. CAS finds this to be one of its most popular activities for volunteers. The South Carolina agency wraps it up with great messaging to young recipients: “Santa's instructions to his elves were very specific. He told them to make sure the little boys and girls knew that it was going to be too cold on his sleigh for the kittens, so he was delivering them by elf couriers!”

I'm available for Special Delivery!

Adopt a puppy or kitten by Dec. 23 and have Santa deliver on Christmas Eve. (Additional fees and restrictions apply)

Operation: Home for the Holidays!

100 Caja del Rio Road
983-4309, ext. 610
sfhumanesociety.org