

What should you do if you find a stray animal?

True or False- It is cruel for a citizen to turn a stray animal into the County Animal Shelter?

False- If an owner loses their pet they should be able to redeem it at the local County Animal Shelter. If citizens follow the simple procedure correctly an owner should be able to find their pet within hours after it becomes lost.

Annually, well-meaning citizens act as an obstacle to this simple procedure. How? These well-meaning citizens view the County Animal Services shelter as something bad, because they “euthanize” animals there. Turning a stray animal in promptly and the animal being redeemed from the shelter promptly actually decreases shelter overpopulation and unnecessary euthanasias. The overcrowding problem occurs when stray animals are not redeemed by their owners and more animals come in who are not redeemed, and so on.....

Santa Barbara County Animal Services is the only shelter that can accept stray animals. If a stray animal is taken to another shelter it will be turned over to Animal Services. So if someone loses a pet this is where they must go to find it.

What is bad or sad is when a responsible owner comes to the County shelter straight away to redeem their pet and their pet is not at the shelter, because a well-meaning citizen thinks it will find its way back home, or it is better for the animal to find a second chance on the street- because someone will choose to take it in and keep it.

These well-meaning citizens are not thinking about the other side of the scenario. Shelter hours are limited and a responsible pet owner might be able to take time off from work a few times during the first week, but then it can become a hardship. What happens if their pet is turned in 2 weeks later? Continued visits to the shelter during business hours can cause friction at work, and cause a responsible owner to give up looking.

If a stray animal is not turned in right away, it may roam the streets for days or weeks without being taken to the County shelter. By this time the owner may have given up hope and the animal has been subjected to a variety of dangerous and cruel situations.

If someone chooses to keep a stray animal, what about the family that has lost it? Experiencing a family in tears and worrying needlessly about what happened to their beloved pet when it gets out of the yard and becomes lost is very difficult. If you or someone you know has found a stray animal and is interested in adopting it, first show compassion for the family that may be desperately looking for it. As you turn it over to Animal Services let be known that you are interested in adopting the animal if the owner does not redeem it. If it is not redeemed by its owner you will be given first consideration.

**Please honor these simple steps to help reunite families
and stop the overcrowding in our local shelters.
Every small act makes a huge overall difference.**

Santa Barbara Shelter – 5473 Overpass Road

Hours: M-F: 9am to 4:45pm
Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Phone: (805) 681-5285

Lompoc Shelter – 1501 W. Central Avenue

Hours: M-F: 9am to 4:45pm
Closed for lunch 12:30 – 1:30pm
Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Phone: (805) 737-7755

Santa Maria Animal Center – 548 W. Foster Road

Hours: M-F: 9am to 4:45pm
Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Phone: (805) 934-6119