



**February 26, 2015**

## **Position Statement on Pets as Gifts**

### **Adopted by the Sonoma Humane Society Board of Directors**

The Sonoma Humane Society (SHS) supports, promotes and strives to be the foremost advocate for the best policies, procedures, and practices as they apply to the animals of Sonoma County and beyond. Towards the accomplishment of these goals, the SHS Board of Directors adopts the following:

**Pets brought into a household as gifts do not necessarily result in a higher rate of relinquishment, and therefore, the specific act of giving a pet as a gift should not be discouraged by shelters or other animal welfare groups.**

Background: There is a long-standing belief that giving pets as gifts is a bad idea. But a recent study by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) has resulted in a re-evaluation of this belief and sufficient evidence has been presented to remove the “no-pets-as-gifts” rule from general policy. In fact, there is no data supporting the “no-pets-as-gifts” position, only anecdotes and unsubstantiated policy.

#### **Supporting evidence to this policy change includes:**

- **There is data, increasing in recent years, and culminating in an ASPCA statement that there is no evidence of increased relinquishment of pets given as gifts; and that in fact “pets acquired as gifts are less likely to be relinquished than pets acquired by the individual.”<sup>1</sup>**

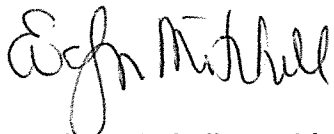
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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.asPCA.org/about-us/asPCA-policy-and-position-statements/position-statement-on-pets-as-gifts>

- Another study identified 71 reasons given for pet relinquishment: “[7]. ‘Unwanted gift’ was listed as a reason for only 0.3% of dogs and 0.4% of cats entering the shelters surveyed “.<sup>2</sup>
- Research also shows that “the lack of associations between receiving a dog or cat as a gift and its impact on self-perceived love/attachment and whether or not respondents still had the dog or cat in the home is evidence supporting the notion that pets given as gifts are not at higher risk for abandonment.”<sup>3</sup>
- ASPCA states that the misconception of pets being poor choices as gifts “may not only prevent the movement of shelter animals to potentially loving homes, but also drive potential adopters toward unscrupulous and inhumane sources for pets including pet stores that almost always get their inventory from puppy mills.”<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, we, the Board of Directors of the Sonoma Humane Society encourage the well-counseled adoption of pets, preferably from shelters or rescues, and presented as gifts or otherwise, providing that the pet is altered, and placed in a loving and responsible home.

We adopt this position today, **February 26, 2015** and declare it to be in accordance with the Sonoma Humane Society mission statement: *Ensuring every animal receives protection, compassion, love and care.*



**Evelyn Mitchell, President**  
**Sonoma Humane Society Board of Directors**

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<sup>2</sup> Scarlett, J.M.; Salman, M.D.; New, J.G., Jr.; Kass, P.H. Reasons for Relinquishment of Companion Animals in U.S. Animal Shelters: Selected Health and Personal Issues. *J. Appl. Anim. Welf. Sci.* 1999, 2, 41–57.

<sup>3</sup> Weiss E, Dolan ED, Garrison L, Hong J, Slater M. “Should Dogs and Cats be Given as Gifts?” *Animals*. 2013; 3(4):995-1001.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.aspca.org/blog/yes-its-okay-to-give-pets-as-gifts>