

THE PETAGRAM



A PUBLICATION OF THE ALEXANDRIA ANIMAL SHELTER

SPRING 1986

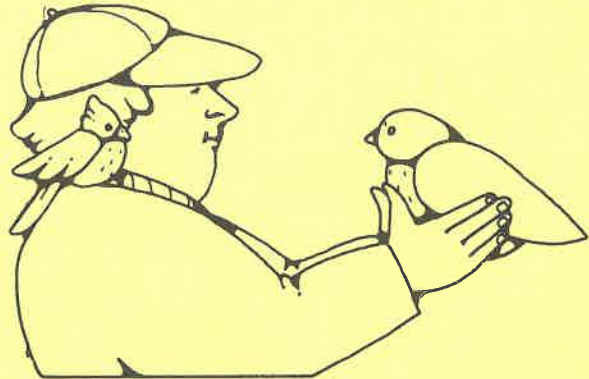
PALS FOR SENIORS

The Alexandria Animal Shelter will introduce a new program, merging the needs of older pets and senior persons, on February 14. To be known as PALS - Pets Adopting Loving Seniors - the Shelter staff, aided by many volunteers, will endeavor to match some of the older dogs and cats with older persons who live alone.

Research is showing something that pet owners have known all along: pets are good for people. Especially for the senior who lives alone, pets give an interest and purpose in life, something alive to care for which will be responsive to attention. Placing animals in private homes of alone seniors is a fairly recent development, and outgrowth of the successful use of animals in "pet therapy" in hospitals, children's home, group homes, and even prison.

Careful planning will be the key to the success of PALS: Careful selection of suitable cats and dogs, at least three years old; watchful observation over a period of time of temperament and training; a complete physical examination by a veterinarian; getting all the necessary "shots".

Seniors will be helped in making a decision by trained volunteers, who will also continue to work with the new owner and pet for six months, in taking them to and from the veterinarian, if necessary, and helping in the adjustment.



Having a pet is not inexpensive. Feeding and care for a dog can run \$250 - \$300 a year; for a cat, \$150 - \$200. As many seniors live on a fixed income, the Alexandria PALS program will help with the adoption costs; first "shots"; spay/neuter (if needed); food for six months; and much of the preliminary equipment for food, water, and play.

Careful selection, matching, and followup is essential for it is traumatic for both the new owner and the pet if things do not work out, which the Shelter staff hopes to avoid through thorough planning. Each new adopter will also receive a card, to be carried in purse or wallet, with the information about the pet left at home should the adopter be incapacitated by illness or accident away from home. This card will also have the name of a volunteer pal.

Initial financial support for the PALS program has come from the Alice Ritchie Memorial Fund for Animal Welfare.

Anyone who has owned a pet knows how much animals have to offer, especially if they are Pets Adopting Loving Seniors.

The Alexandria Animal Shelter-- Animal Care Team

Animal Caretakers

Paul Higdon
Alison Newlen
Bill Shanley

Animal Control Officers

Anna Allen
Debra Crane
Christine Mills
Helen Brading
Angie Baity
Carolinda Wayland
Kathy Bushman
Linda Hurd

Animal Control Clerk

Lost & Found Clerk

Adoption Officer

PALS Program Leaders

Assistant Director

Director

Lori Flynn

Gail Snider

Alexandria Animal Shelter

Hours of Operation

Monday through Saturday

9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Hours for Viewing Animals

Monday and Friday

Noon - 3:00 p.m.

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday

11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Wednesday evenings

5:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

The Animal Shelter is a division of the Transportation and Environmental Services Department.

LOST PETS: FINDERS KEEPERS?

Often persons will "take in" or care for an apparently stray dog or cat without ever reporting it to the Animal Shelter. The attitude is that cats don't really belong to anyone anyway, and anyone who doesn't take care of a dog doesn't deserve to have it.

Then there are those who are reluctant to turn a stray animal over to the Animal Shelter, because "they kill it". Actually, turning an animal over to the Animal Shelter has many advantages: the staff will try to locate the owner, first by checking through the lost reports, then by advertising it as found for five days. If it has any kind of identification, this, too, will be traced.

Secondly, if the owner does come to the Animal Shelter to claim the dog, the staff will try to help the owner discover how the dog got away, to save it from getting loose again and perhaps hit by a car.

These same steps are taken for a cat.

If, out of the kindness of your heart, you feed and care for a cat for some time - and then suddenly discover you can't keep it for whatever reason - it has become "your cat", and not a stray, and the owner's lost report has probably been lost in the shuffle.

Be fair to the owner and the animal, turn it over to the Animal Shelter - or at least call in a Found Report.

"Why can't I open the front door and let my dog out to do its business? People have always done this."

This comment - with more or less colorful language - is often irately asked by residents who suddenly find a "warning" on their door that (1) their dog must be on a leash at all times when off their own property and (2) that except in dog exercise areas, they are expected to clean up after it.

One of the most unhappy experiences for an Animal Warden is having to pick up a "DOA" or injured dog hit by a car. The dog that always just did its thing and returned promptly, one day was sidetracked and ended up many blocks away.

Years ago the dog population in cities was not as great, therefore their activity was tolerable. However, now with more dogs and cats, sanitation and health problems have multiplied necessitating each person to clean up for his own pet. Not only does the dog waste create a most undesirable odor, it attracts rats and flies with their attendant health and sanitation problems.

If you value your pet, don't let it run off the leash. If you value your community (not to mention the regard of your neighbors), clean up.



GOOD DOG OR NUISANCE?

Does your dog bark excessively . . .

- * When he is left alone and lonesome?
- * When another dog barks?
- * When the kids next door come out to play?
- * When the neighbors leave or return home?
- * When you come home?
- * At garbage collectors, meter readers?
- * When he hears a siren?

If your answer is, "Yes," to any one of these, your dog could be a neighborhood noise nuisance.

We've published a brochure titled "Quiet - Man's Best Friend" which outlines some excellent methods to assist owners in training their dogs not to bark. Call us and we'll mail you one -- free!

KEEP YOUR DOG HOME

Train your pet not to go out of the house or yard!

"I had company. As we were talking at the door, my dog slipped out and went running down the street."

"There was a delivery and they left the gate open."

"I don't know how he got out."

These and many other statements are made by frantic owners trying to find their lost pets. Did they have any identification?

"No. He's never outside." "No. We just finished bathing him." "No. ..."

NEVER let your dog go without a collar with some good form of identification on it. The collar should be loose enough to be able to slip a couple of fingers between the collar and the dog's neck but not so loose that the dog can slip out the collar. Two excellent ID's are the current City license and an engraved tag with your name and phone number. Every so often check these tags to be sure they can be clearly read. Some become so worn as to be undecipherable.

Some dogs may require special attention and grooming to keep the neck area from matting, but this is preferable to losing a good dog and pet because you took the collar off and forgot to put it back on.

A flyer, "Safe and Legal Ways of Keeping Your Dog Controlled", is available free for the asking from the Alexandria Animal Shelter.

PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

With the coming of warmer weather many tend to let their dogs out more and longer. The dogs can become exposed to distemper and "parvo", two sneaky, silent killers.

Another killer, which is not detected until either too late or it requires very costly treatment to cure, is heartworms.

Preventive treatment is best for your pet: distemper/parvo inoculation once a year; heartworm check once a year, followed by medication during mosquito season; and rabies vaccination once every third year.

Information on these is available from the Alexandria Animal Shelter.

SHELTER HELP

If you are beginning to think vacation, the Shelter has some good information on selecting a kennel, shipping a dog, or selecting a pet sitter.

GIVE US A CALL

Do call 838-4775 as soon as possible if you see a dead animal within the City. Be exact on its location. An Animal Warden will pick it up; and, if it's a dog or cat, Shelter staff will see if there is a lost report on it. Call between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

If a squirrel "sound off", he's not sick; he's angry. See if you can find what he's fussing at: cat, another squirrel, or whatever?

DON'T RISK IT!

To often persons will adopt a cute kitten or even a puppy or dog well knowing pets are forbidden in their rental unit. This is especially true of cats because they can be kept inside and "no one will ever know".

That is, no one will ever know until the cat decides the sunny window is just the place for a view of the outside world, or it meows loudly and is heard.

This too often results in an ultimatum: out goes the cat, or you are evicted. This is a traumatic experience to say the least, especially if you have been able to hide the cat's existence for some months and have become fond of it. What makes it even worse is that it proves extremely difficult, usually, to find a permanent home for the pet. Guilt feelings become mixed with sorrow at this impasse, and there is no relief when you find the animal shelters cannot guarantee a permanent home for it.

DON'T RISK IT! It's not fair to the cat, you, the rental agent, or the shelter staff who have to explain to you.

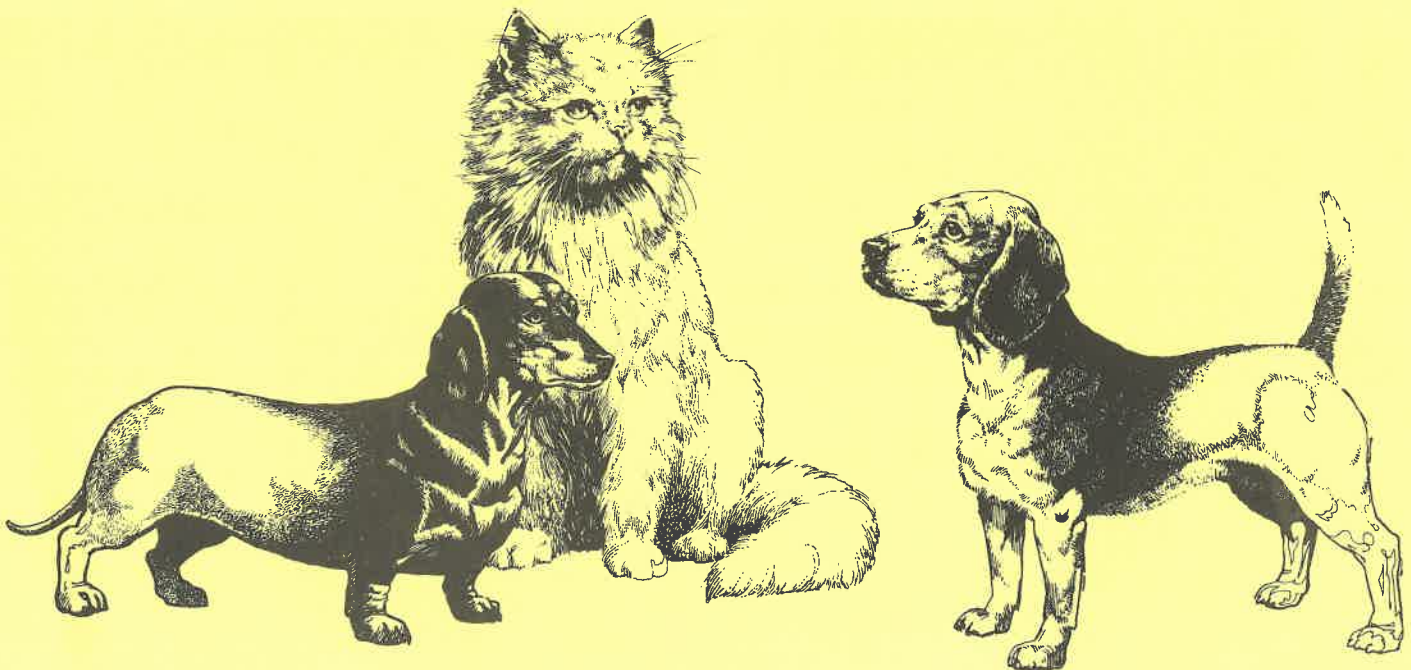
"Living Together" is an excellent guide for landlords and pet owning tenants which may be obtained from the Shelter by asking for it.

GOODBYE TO A GOOD FRIEND

The PALS program volunteer coordinator, Nancy Cornett-Zubala, is moving from Alexandria.

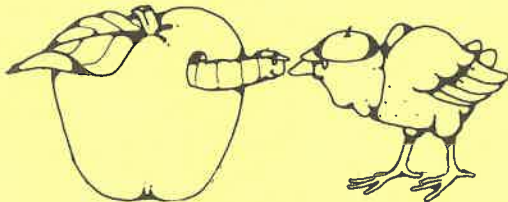
Nancy worked for months helping research and develop the program; train volunteers; and assemble all the elements of the program in a master notebook to make it efficient and easy to implement. Her enthusiasm and kind spirit have been contagious to others involved.

We all wish you the very best as you move on to St. Louis, Nancy. We'll miss you very much.



MAMA WILL GET THAT BABY BIRD

Baby birds often fall out of the nest. The best aid people can give is to leave them alone and keep dogs, cats, and children away. Blue Jays and mockingbirds especially will dive bomb anyone trying to pick up their fledglings. These, robins, and others will rescue their babies.



BIRD IN HOUSE?

The frantic darting of a bird trapped in a room can be frightening. However, it is seeking an outlet. Birds are attracted to light. Close the curtains, if possible, and doors to other rooms, then open an outside door or window. The bird will usually go on out, if you will keep quiet and out of its way.

UNWANTED BIRD NESTS

Another suggestion in "Critter Control", a leaflet published by the Alexandria Animal Shelter, tells how to get rid of unwanted birds nesting on balconies and in carports:

Remove the nests, repeatedly if necessary, and wash the railings or area with bleach, if possible. Do this before the birds have had a chance to lay eggs. Be patient and persistent.

CAP THOSE CHIMNEYS

Sometimes it's hard for us two-legged mammals to remember we moved into an Alexandria site after the wildlife had lived there for generations, and we resent their moving into our chimneys and attics.

Springtime is "baby time". If you have failed to cap your chimney and suddenly find a raccoon family has moved in, please be patient and give them a chance to grow and move out.

Sometime a radio (with raucous loud music) and/or an open container with household ammonia placed in the fireplace will encourage them to move out.

Suggestions for help are contained in "Critter Control," one of the Animal Shelter publications.

OH, MY!

An opossum is usually very non-aggressive. If it hisses at you, it's frightened. Leave it alone, or gently shoo it along with a broom.

Discourage opossums and raccoons from staying around by keeping food away from them. Feed pets inside or take their leftovers inside as soon as they stop eating.

If you are no longer in a position to share the Pet-a-gram with your organization, would you call us and give us the name and address of the contact person. Thank You.
838-4775