

Humane Society of Elmore County News – 4 Feb ‘19
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Abandoned is a legal term that indicates a pet has been left to fend for itself by its owner and something we know far too much about in our shelter. Think about it – last year the ‘owners’ of 2615 dogs and cats in Elmore County actively left them to ‘make it on their own’ (or die), or for someone else to find and deal with. There is a reason this is a criminal act though sadly virtually never prosecuted.

Out of the 1241 Adult Dogs (over six months old) we took in last year, 834 came to us as strays. Of these 834, 26% (216) were reclaimed by their owners happy to get their wayward pet back. Sadly when we look at puppies (under six months old), the reclaim rate dropped to 4% which indicates that there are people who take their unwanted litters of puppies and simply dump them to fend for themselves (536 ‘stray’ puppies last year). How many more litters of puppies were abandoned only to die by starvation, dehydration, cars, wildlife... simply heartbreaking to think about.

Where cats are concerned the news is absolutely abysmal. Of the 378 ‘Adult Stray Cats’ brought to us in 2018 only 11 or 2% were reclaimed by their owner. And of the 817 “Stray Kittens” brought in 2018, their reclaim was only .24%. That left 1204 “Stray” cats & kittens for us to care for and try to find homes for, BESIDES the 804 cats & kittens turned in to us by their owners. Now with cats, many of these are feral (meaning no owner) and we understand that. Cats are also exceedingly challenging as they can be gone for weeks or months before returning home, so we get quite excited whenever we can get a cat back to its family!

And don’t forget that those strays are not the only pets we are dealing with as we took in over 1506 dogs and cats surrendered by their owners! Pretty daunting numbers no matter how you look at this!

So while pets can and do run away or get lost, why is it that so very few are ever reclaimed by their owners? Sure, we take in pets that are starved, filthy, sick and may very well deserve a better home than the one they had. But we also receive a lot of pets in perfect health, well groomed, clean, new collars (hardly ever any rabies/ID tag or microchip), and yet no owner comes for far too many of these pets. And in more than a few cases the owners know their pet(s) is with us but choose to simply not come for it.

Our dogs and cats depend on us for their care and well-being which is why abandoning a dog or cat is not only morally wrong, but punishable as a Class A Misdemeanor as Cruelty to Animals under the Alabama Code Section 13A-11-240(b). This code states: “the word “cruel” as used in this article shall mean: Every act, omission, or neglect, **including abandonment**, where unnecessary or unjustifiable pain or suffering, **including abandonment**, is caused or where unnecessary pain or suffering is allowed to continue.”

No matter how upset we may be at the people who dump these pets or never seem to look for their own pet, we highly commend all the people who take them in, pick them up off the side of road, take the sick and injured to veterinarians, try to find the owners and do all they can to help these scared and bewildered pets who wanted so little in return for their loyalty.

If you have any questions about surrendering a pet or if you have found a stray or believe an animal to have been abandoned please call us at 334-567-3377 or email hselco@bellsouth.net for guidance. Our first wish for any lost pet is to find its way back home and we will always work diligently to help strayed pets go safely back home with their owner.