

SANDRA L. FRANKEL
SUPERVISOR'S COLUMN
04-02-08

PET OWNERSHIP

The spring season brings a plethora of sights and sounds: April showers, May flowers.....and as always, an abundance of kittens and puppies.

Anatole France said, "Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened." There are over 200 million people in the United States who would surely agree. We are a nation of animal lovers. Statistics show that more than half of all households have at least one pet, including 75 million dogs, 90 million cats, and various furry and feathered creatures of all shapes and sizes. Does it ever feel like they all live in your own neighborhood, or maybe even next door? The town of Brighton has guidelines in place to ensure that we respect our citizens' right to peaceful living as much as we respect our animals.

Along with pet ownership comes responsibility. All dogs must be licensed in the town of Brighton, as mandated by New York State Law. In 2007, the Town Clerk's Office issued 1592 dog licenses. The town of Brighton has made it quicker and easier than ever for responsible dog owners to obtain the requisite licensing. For the convenience of residents, dog licenses may be obtained Monday through Friday at the Town Clerk's office or via mail to the Brighton Town Clerk, 2300 Elmwood Avenue, Rochester, NY 14618. The license application form is available on the Town Clerk's Web site at www.townofbrighton.org. We continue to make the licensing process convenient, affordable and accessible to Brighton residents and offer a senior discount as well as "No fee" licensing for service dogs. We also offer two- and three-year licenses contingent upon proof of rabies vaccination. Check with the Town Clerk's Office (784-5240) for guidelines.

Pedestrian rules of the road for our four-footed friends require dogs to be leashed at all times, for the safety of your pet as well as your neighbors. Our town's Animal Control Officers Dave Ewell, Frank Farina and Bruce Blackman have the responsibility to enforce local rules, regulations and ordinances. Please help to keep our neighborhoods pet friendly and safe by keeping a watchful eye on your pet.

We cherish our animal companions and welcome them into our family. What moves us to open our hearts and homes in such magnitude? Is it the renowned health benefits of the soothing effects of a wagging tail or purring bundle of fur, or the gift of unequivocal love and companionship that pets offer us and our children?

We shower love and attention on our family pets, but it is sobering to realize that there are not enough homes for those animals than need them. Animal shelters are filled to overflowing every year, peaking in the spring through fall months. More than 20,000 unwanted animals were surrendered to local shelters in 2007 --- 15,000 to Lollypop Farm alone. Incoming cats outnumber dogs three to one. This heartbreaking statistic is a grim reminder that animals need our help and intervention.

What can you do? Responsible pet ownership begins with spaying and neutering your animal! This simple procedure is the single most effective method to control the burgeoning pet population. There are many affordable programs in the community that offer assistance with animal health care. Visit Lollypop Farm's Web site at www.lollypop.org for information about programs such as "SNIP" (Spay Neuter Incentive Program), Senior Citizen Pet Assistance, and Seniors-for-Seniors, a program that eliminates adoption fees and spay/neuter costs for seniors adopting older pets.

Finally, I urge you to consider pet adoption from a licensed shelter or adoption agency. There are many programs in the community available to those who are considering pet adoption, but need a little financial help. Please call your local animal shelter, veterinarian's office, or animal hospital and they will be happy to guide you. Giving a home to an animal in need is a rewarding experience.

We owe our beloved pets a safe, healthy and peaceful environment. Pet ownership takes not only a big heart, but an ongoing commitment to doing what's right for our animal companions, our neighbors, and our community.