



Do you need to surrender your pet?

Australia is a nation of pet lovers. 12 million Australians have an association with pets with 63% of households including a companion animal. (Ref www.petnet.com.au)

And yet, 250,000 healthy dogs and cats are euthanased each year. Pounds and shelters across Australia are inundated on a daily basis with animals of all types and ages.

While it seems a paradox, it is the sad reality of life for many Australian companion animals.

So why do these animals end up in the pound? What can we do to reverse this? If you are considering surrendering your pet to a pound or shelter- STOP. There may be avenues you have not yet explored.

Many of the dogs currently on death row were much loved family pets at some point in their life. Despite the fact that the dogs may be well behaved, wonderful companions-many do not make it out of the pound or shelter alive.

Change in an owner's circumstance as well as behaviour problems are two major reasons for dog surrender. Moving house, having a baby, dissolving relationships, financial pressures and behavior problems are commonly heard at shelters across Australia as an owner hands over their once beloved pet.

There are places to turn and people to assist you if you are beginning to question your ability to keep your pet.

Reasons for Surrender- And the solutions that may save your pet

Moving House- Plan in advance, particularly if you are renting and you are likely to need to move at some point in the future. Renting with pets can be tough but there are a number of strategies you can use to make finding a pet friendly rental easier.

- Consider where you are living- some suburbs are more pet friendly than others
- When looking for a property to rent with pets, consider neat but older properties without manicured gardens- owners of these properties are often more open to tenants with pets.
- Some apartment blocks are pet-friendly, especially for small dogs – do you research and you may find an ideal location
- Get references for your dogs from your vet, dog trainer/ obedience club and your current agent/ landlord
- Always look after the rental property you are in with your pets and follow the specifications in your rental agreement- this will make your landlord more likely to either extend your lease or to rent to someone with pets again



- Try to get the owner to come and meet you and your pet and to be reassured that the pet is not a risk. It's worth stressing that often young children cause more damage than pets
- Offer to pay a slightly larger bond and stress that of course any damages will be paid for, as would damages from any other tenant –created problem
- Note: many landlords who are not pet owners simply operate under an unsubstantiated fear. It's worth talking to them to reassure them that their fear is unfounded. Ask them what is their concern? Then provide a reasonable response to that. Many prospective tenants with animals don't even try to speak to the landlord. Don't let the Agent block your efforts.

Having a Baby- Having a baby can be an exciting and busy time and preparing your four legged family members can ensure a smooth transition for the whole family. Having a baby should NOT be an automatic trip to the pound for your pets- with the following tips you can have a safe baby and happy well adjusted dog.

- Identify behaviour problems during your pregnancy that may impact when you have the baby. While it may not have been a problem in the past for your dog to jump up for instance, this will be the last thing you want when you are carrying a newborn. With a little training during your pregnancy- jumping up, stealing food or items, barking or running rampant through the house can all become behaviours of the past!
- Teach the dog to walk by an empty pram so that baby and dog can walk safely together
- Start to be flexible with your pet's routine- vary feeding and walking times so that your pet can cope with the ups and downs of a newborn schedule.
- Make your dogs toys a different material to your baby's toys and teach the dog in advance what toys are his and what toys are only for baby
- Set up bouncer nets, crib and floor mats and teach your dog to give these items some space. Have the dog on lead in the house so you can reinforce what you are teaching
- Supervision is vital- never leave ANY dog alone with any baby or child
- If the changes are made before the baby arrives, jealousy is unlikely to develop. Jealousy is often assumed to be the problem- when in actual fact, it's the changes to the dogs routine that are the problem. There will be a period of adjustment with any dog and good preparation will make this as easy as possible.

It is much easier to reinforce behaviours that you have already taught to your dog than to teach new behaviour when you are stressed and sleep deprived! Dogs can be a wonderful part of your family and great companions for children- Don't exclude, isolate or be rid of your dog when with just a little training- you and your children can have a wonderful companion! Remember that many behaviour problems can be solved with the help of a qualified trainer.



Financial Pressures- With rising interest rates and petrol prices, it can be difficult to balance a family budget. There are ways to reduce costs for our pets without compromising their care and health.

- What do you feed your dog? Consider preparing a balanced raw diet for your pet. With a little preparation, a raw diet can be a very economical AND healthy way to feed your pet. You can fill out your dog bowl with most of the food your family eat (not onions!)
- Discount desexing and vaccination programs are available in many areas- contact your vet, council and local animal shelter to find out more
- Many worming treatments, shampoos etc are available online at significantly reduced prices. Look for these and specials in your local pet supply stores or supermarkets.

Dissolving relationships

- Remember that your pets do not understand all the changes that are occurring- they may be confused and stressed. Leaving them in a pound or shelter will only add to this.
- Decide early on who will be taking the dog/s and BOTH people should assist in finding suitable dog friendly accommodation
- If a period of transition makes it difficult to have the dog/s for a short time, consider friends/ family members, boarding or day care to assist you

Behaviour Problems

Many owners feel at a loss when faced with a pet that has a behaviour problem. You are not alone!! Thousands of owners across the country experience behaviour problems with their dogs and there are a range of solutions to ensure that you can keep your pet and be on your way to a happier relationship and lower stress levels.

There are very few behaviour problems that cannot see improvement with the right training techniques and some commitments from the owners. Behaviour problems do not have to be a part of your dog's personality and can be resolved!

Passing the problem on to others will often worsen the issue and cause the dog to bounce from home to home until they find themselves in a pound or shelter with an uncertain future.

If you have a behaviour problem with your dog-

- Consider contacting your local obedience club for problems such as pulling on the lead or disobeying commands



- A qualified trainer can assist anyone who has more difficult time constraints by providing a one on one, in house training session
- Qualified behavioural trainers can assist with more serious issues including aggression, separation anxiety, barking and destructive behaviours
- Speak with your vet or others in the industry for trainer recommendations and referrals

People “surrendering” their animals are a major source of cats and dogs entering pounds and shelters, and consequently swell the alarmingly high euthanasia figures across Australia.

Remember that many pounds and shelters will not automatically rehome your animal, even if they say they will try. The majority are euthanased as there are simply too many to rehome. It’s important that you understand that.

If you have exhausted all possible options and absolutely must surrender your cat or dog, ensure that you find a pound or shelter that has a low-kill philosophy. A low-kill strategy means that they will do everything in their power to rehome healthy animals. There are far more hi-kill pounds than low-kill, so beware, if you really care about your animal.

If your pet is a valuable part of your family, we are confident that you’ll do what it takes to solve the problem and use surrender as a very last option.

Explore all of your options before making such a decision- there may be a perfect alternative to surrendering your pet- you just need to find it!

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This section added from UK Dogs Trust: Wag! News autumn 2008

Top Tips for finding dog friendly accommodation.

Write a CV for your pet, so your landlord can objectively consider your dog as a suitable tenant.

- Include: your dog’s breed, size, age and activity levels
- Highlight his history of good behaviour and house training
- If he has attended and completed training classes
- If your dog is neutered
- Get a reference from your previous landlord or letting agent
- Offer to pay a larger deposit to cover any damage
- Supply details of your vet and provide up-to date vaccination and flea treatment history
- Stress that dogs are very effective burglar deterrents!