

## Financial Hardship and your Pet

Pets have been among the voiceless victims of the current economic downturn. Animals have been left behind in foreclosed homes, and shelters are reporting that families are struggling to keep and feed pets.

### **Don't Leave Pets Behind**

Abandoned pets face a grim future. Many pets trapped inside abandoned homes aren't found until they're on the brink of starvation. Those lucky enough to reach a shelter have about a 50 percent chance of being adopted.

No one likes to think of leaving their pet at a shelter, but if you can't take him with you, it is by far more humane than leaving them in an apartment or a house alone. Too many animals die alone this way every year. If people are absolutely unable to care for their pet any longer, they should take him or her to their local animal shelter or animal control agency. The shelter can provide food and housing while they try and locate a new home.

### **Plan Ahead**

These outcomes can be avoided by planning ahead as much as possible and finding pet-friendly housing. The following steps can help in the search for pet-friendly rental housing:

- Give yourself enough time. If possible, check ads and contact real estate agents and rental agencies at least six weeks before you plan to move or when you first learn that foreclosure and/or eviction may be in your future.
- Make use of available resources. Contact the humane society or animal care and control agency serving the area into which you are moving; the agency may be able to provide you with a list of apartment communities that allow pets.
- Gather proof that you're responsible. The more documentation you can provide attesting to your conscientiousness as a pet owner, the more convincing your appeal will be to your future landlord. This can include statements from current property managers and neighbors that you maintain your pet responsibly, as well as copies of veterinary records showing ongoing pet care.
- Get it in writing. Once you have permission from a landlord, manager or condominium committee to have a pet, be sure to get it in writing. Comprehensive agreements protect people, property and the pets themselves.

### **Cutting Costs**

Individuals facing financial hardships can reduce the cost of pet ownership in many ways. Some tips include:

- While buying expensive toys and accessories has become a popular way to demonstrate your attachment to your pet, your pet can be just as happy with less expensive toys or homemade toys. They need your love and attention more than a pricey product. The HSUS has tips for inexpensive toys for both cats and dogs.
- Keep your pets safe inside or on a leash while walking outside. Animals allowed to roam freely are more prone to accidents and resulting veterinary bills.
- Let your veterinarian know that finances are tight and ask that he or she prescribe only the most vital vaccinations to keep your pet healthy.