
How to Start an Animal Sanctuary



by Faith Maloney
Director of Animal Care



Best Friends
ANIMAL SOCIETY

About Best Friends Animal Society

Best Friends Animal Society is working with you – and with humane groups all across the country – to bring about a time when there are no more homeless pets.

The sanctuary at Angel Canyon, in the Golden Circle of southern Utah, is home, on any given day, to about 1,500 dogs, cats, and other animals from all over the country. Many of them need just a few weeks of special care before they're ready to go to good new homes. Others, who are older and sicker, or who have suffered extra trauma, find a home and a haven here, and are given loving care for the rest of their lives.

In our home state, Best Friends manages a model No More Homeless Pets campaign with shelters and humane groups, to ensure that every healthy companion animal that's ever born can be guaranteed a caring home.

And Best Friends reaches across the nation, helping humane groups, individual people, and entire communities to set up spay/neuter, shelter, foster, and adoption programs in their own neighborhoods, cities, and states.

The work of Best Friends is supported entirely through the donations of our members. Through the generous hearts and hands of people like you, we're getting close to the day when there will be No More Homeless Pets.

Thank you for being part of this work of love.

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Dear Friend,

You are reading this publication because you care about animals. You've probably also taken in a stray animal or two, provided them with care and love, and brought kindness into their lives. Whether you are saving five or five thousand, you are making a difference to each and every one of them.

Caring for animals requires patience, love, time, money and a lifetime commitment. The animals you rescue bring with them different needs and experiences, and the demands on you will be substantial. The rewards are worth every minute of care, and with this publication we are hoping to help you understand exactly what "every minute of care" really means.

We here at Best Friends do not claim to have all the answers. Indeed, we have made many mistakes. But we welcome this opportunity to share the knowledge we have gained over a number of years of taking care of animals.

Opening your own sanctuary involves interacting with people, raising funds, building facilities, dealing with legal issues, and more. But before you begin to think about all that, we strongly encourage you to do the following three things:

1. Visit and volunteer at a sanctuary or shelter near you.

Best Friends is always open to visitors and volunteers. Just call us and we'll help you plan your experience with us, and answer all of your questions to the best of our ability. If you would like to volunteer closer to your home, we may be able to help you locate no-kill sanctuaries nearer to you.

2. Plan.

It is advisable to have a plan in place before you start. Here are some basic questions that need answers:

- What species of animals are you planning to shelter – dogs, cats, horses, birds, or other?
- How many animals are you planning to shelter?
- Where will you house these animals?
- Who will help you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week?
- What will it cost you to rescue these animals – i.e., time and money?

3. Be realistic.

How many animals can you really handle? Think about your current life and the effect taking care of animals will have on it. Money and space are not the only issues. So is your time and your commitment.

Best wishes on your new adventure.

Faith Maloney
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Shelter

Providing shelter for the animals means you need land and buildings. It is helpful at this point to decide what kind of animals you will be rescuing. This will determine how large a piece of land you will need, and what you will require for housing the animals.

Land and Zoning

Once you've selected some suitable land, find out what the zoning laws are for that land. Depending on where you're trying to build, you'll need to contact either the city or county offices. If there are existing buildings on the land, a building inspector may be able to advise you about zoning.

Zoning laws regulate how land is used, how many animals are allowed, and what species you can have on it. Agricultural zoning is the most open to animals. But even that type of zoning doesn't cover exotics.

Zoning is only one of the issues to consider in the purchase of land. You also need to consider your neighbors' rights. How close are they? Housing dogs can be noisy, and if you don't have a buffer zone, like land or trees to dissipate the sound, your neighbors can legally file a complaint and perhaps force you to close down your operation.

Leasing land does not offer any stability for the animals. You don't want to be in the situation of having to relocate a large number of animals if a lease is not renewed. So it is important for the sanctuary itself to own its own land. Problems can arise when an individual owns the land. If there is a falling out between that person and other sanctuary personnel, the animals could be in jeopardy.

You also need to consider the terrain. Is the land prone to flooding? Is the property accessible to the public? Is there water and power on the land? If not, can it be brought in easily? Or can alternatives be provided in the form of solar units and water storage tanks? Are the access roads passable all year round? There are a lot of questions to ask

in relation to a piece of land you are looking at. It is best to ask them all upfront before getting into a situation that might prove to be unsuitable for what you have in mind.

Buildings

You might find land that has a building or buildings on it. These can often be adapted for your uses. Usually, though, you have to start from scratch. Think about what kind of facilities the animals need to have a good quality of life.

Unlike a traditional shelter, where the animals are there for a short time, you will need to think in terms of lifetime care. It's not satisfactory, for example, to house dogs in single runs for years on end. To have a satisfying life, dogs need the companionship of humans and other dogs.

Cats also love to be with their own kind, and their permanent housing should take this into account. In fact, no animal likes to be on his/her own. Unless there is a health or safety issue, all the animals in your care should have friends with whom to share their lives.

However, it is best to keep cats and dogs as far away from each other as possible. Cats can be stressed by being housed too close to dogs. Even constant barking in the background can create stress-related health issues for cats. So, take this into consideration when planning the layout of your facilities.

You will also need to create intake isolation facilities. To protect your resident population from exposure to disease, you'll need to have a place to house any incoming animals for a minimum of two weeks. During that time, you will be able to assess each animal's health and temperament. These facilities can be smaller, since they will not be the animals' permanent dwellings.

If you already have the complete health and temperament history of an animal coming into your care, you can waive the two-week isolation period. We have found it helpful, however, to keep

the animals in a separate area until they get used to the new routine, new diet, and new personnel. It makes merging them into the general population easier.

If you do not have an architect to assist you at this stage, there are many kennel and cattery plans that can be adapted for your unique situation. Information about such plans is available through Shelter Planners of America at www.shelterplannersofamerica.com. Also, visits to other sanctuaries will help you see what works and what doesn't.

Finally, each species has specific housing requirements. Doing some research early on will help you to plan effectively. Here at Best Friends, we have housing not only for dogs and cats, but also for rabbits, indoor and outdoor birds, horses, chickens, goats, sheep, and potbellied pigs.

Medical Care

This can be a make-or-break area! Every animal you rescue will need some medical attention. It could be as minor as making sure the animal's vaccinations are up to date, or as major as orthopedic surgery on a leg or hip. You will need to be prepared financially, emotionally and physically to deal with sickness, injury and disease.

Finding a Veterinarian

Having one or several veterinarians working closely with you will make all the difference in the quality of medical care you can provide for the animals in your charge.

If you are lucky enough to link up with one or more veterinarians who are sympathetic to what you are doing, they can help you with discounts on medicines and procedures. And some may even be able to do pro bono work for you.

If you do not already have a veterinarian that you work with, visit your local vets. Outline your plan and enlist their support. Many sanctuaries are able

to employ a veterinary technician who can, under the direction of a veterinarian, take care of some of the basic day-to-day medical treatments.

Spay/Neuter

We strongly recommend that every sanctuary be linked to an active spay/neuter program. Pet overpopulation is the reason we have to create sanctuaries for unwanted animals, so one of the first priorities is to try and prevent more of these animals from coming into the world.

When possible, the sanctuary itself should offer these services, not only to sanctuary animals, but also to the general public. Best Friends, for example, operates a spay/neuter program for the local area. And every animal who is adopted out from the sanctuary is already “fixed.”

A good resource for information on spay/neuter clinic procedures is Humane Alliance in North Carolina (www.humanealliance.org). To find veterinarians who participate in low-cost programs, call 1-800-248-SPAY or visit www.spayusa.org. SPAY/USA has names of low-cost programs all over the country.

Vaccinations/Medications

Your vet may be able to help you get some supplies at cost. Some feed stores sell basic medications, and many of the pet-supply catalogs carry a variety of supplies at reasonable prices.



Food

It is important to feed good quality food to the animals in your care. Since food will be a constant expense, getting food donated on a regular basis will help defray costs. But, it often requires a lot of legwork and coordination, a good reputation, and a willingness to take whatever they want to give you.

The large pet-supply stores and grocery stores often have broken bags to donate. They usually require that you have a tax-exempt number and nonprofit status, so that their donation is tax-deductible. If there are any pet food distributors in your area, you can ask to be put on their list of groups to receive donations of dog or cat food.

The only problem with donated food is that you might get a mixture of brands and types of food. In our experience, cats do better if their diet is both high quality and consistent. Dogs, being natural scavengers, can tolerate changes in their diet more easily. These choices will be up to you and your budget.

Legal Issues

Legalities may appear to have nothing to do with your desire to rescue animals. However, it's an important part of what you hope to accomplish. If you don't ensure that the legal side of operating a sanctuary is done correctly, you could jeopardize your whole operation.

Nonprofit Status

Tax exempt, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) status is acquired by filing the necessary forms with the IRS. You have to incorporate as a nonprofit in your own state before you can apply for 501(c)(3) status. It is helpful, but not essential, to have a professional (an attorney or accountant) do the paperwork. See the resource section for information on starting a nonprofit corporation.

There are many advantages to having nonprofit status:

1. Donors of goods, services, or money can claim their gift as an offset against their taxes, which may well increase how much they give.
2. Having nonprofit status lends credibility to your organization.
3. It ensures proper separation between the charity and personal finances.

Once you have completed the necessary paperwork, the nonprofit status may take around three months to obtain. You will be issued a three-year provisional tax-exempt status subject to fulfilling IRS requirements and submitting a Form 990 annually with the government. Form 990 details the money taken in and the money spent on behalf of the charity.

It is important to keep good financial records because without them, your nonprofit status could be revoked by the IRS. After three years, when the IRS is satisfied that you are running a legitimate nonprofit, you will be granted a permanent 501(c)(3) status.

Zoning

We covered this area in an earlier section relating to the acquisition of property. But it bears repeating: Make sure that the place where you set up your sanctuary is zoned for this work. The welfare of the animals in your care may be at stake; you don't want to be required to move your whole operation because of a zoning issue.

Insurance

We recommend that you carry liability insurance. Insurance can give you peace of mind around visitors and volunteers should someone fall or get bitten by an animal. All states require you to have your staff covered by worker's compensation insurance. Depending on your operation, there are also other types of insurance that you might need.



For more details about buying insurance, see the Best Friends publication called *Insurance: Covering Your Tail*. You can download it from the No More Homeless Pets section of our website:

www.bestfriends.org/nomorehomelesspets/resourcelibrary/fororganizations.cfm

Attorney and/or Accountant

It is wise to find an attorney and/or an accountant with nonprofit knowledge and sympathy for your cause. Though legal fees can be expensive, good professional advice is key to running your sanctuary correctly in the eyes of the law.

Release Forms

There are several areas where some kind of release form is appropriate. A release form lays out potential problems, or specific requirements, making a person aware of issues or requirements involved in adopting an animal, working with animals, or having an animal undergo a surgical procedure (like a spay or neuter). For example, in



your adoption contract you can cover the limits of your responsibility for the health and behavior of an adopted animal. When you receive an animal, have the owner sign a release form stating that the animal is now the property of your organization.

You may wish to have any volunteers who are working with the animals sign a waiver, indicating that they know that working with animals can be unpredictable. In our spay/neuter program, we include a release clause for surgery in our admittance form. If you plan to board animals at your facility, then a release form would be advisable for that, too. You might want to talk to an attorney about which release forms or waivers would be appropriate for your sanctuary.

Kennel Licenses

Some municipalities require a kennel license, so find out ahead of time if this requirement affects you. Licenses are hard to get in some areas. For example, one municipality I know insists that all the neighbors in the immediate area have to agree to your housing animals before a license will be granted.

Wildlife and Birds

There are many regulations covering the housing and rehabilitation of wildlife and wild birds. If you want to be involved in this area, contact a local wildlife rehabilitator and find out what state and federal regulations govern this work.

Fundraising

To start and then continue to run a sanctuary, you need money. The amount you need depends on the scope of the sanctuary you are planning. You'll want to develop a financial plan that includes details on:

- The number and species of animals you will care for
- The housing facilities that will need to be built and/or renovated
- The cost to house and feed the animals
- The cost to provide medical care for the animals
- The cost of employees' salaries
- The cost of insurance
- Any other miscellaneous costs (advertising, vehicles, attorney fees, etc.)

Planning in advance for the money needed upfront and monthly will ensure that the animals receive the care they need.

You'll be doing fundraising for two basic areas:

Operating expenses. These are the continuing daily expenses of feeding the animals, paying the staff, providing medical care, etc.

Capital expenses. These are for fixed assets, such as buildings, vehicles, an information database, etc.

There are many ways to raise funds. The following pages contain some suggestions based on what we have tried here at Best Friends.

No matter what you think it will cost to save one or many animals, it will always cost a lot more! So, it's a good idea to have a reserve fund in your budget.

Raising Funds for Operating Expenses

To operate the sanctuary, you'll need a continuing and reliable source of funding. This might be a private endowment that guarantees a certain amount every year, or perhaps an annual grant from a foundation. But unless you know for sure that the foundation will deliver each and every year, you should be wary in case you suddenly find yourself with a lot of empty mouths to feed and a well that's gone dry. Indeed, most foundations do not offer funding for operating expenses.

Starting a membership program. Like most other successful animal organizations, Best Friends relies on member donations to meet the operating costs of the sanctuary. (We use the term "member" to describe our supporters. They are not voting members.) The basic components of a membership program are:

1. A way of reaching people and inviting them to sign up as members. You could start with setting up a table or booth at a popular store. Or you could put together a list of animal lovers in your community and send out a mailing.
2. A way to keep in touch with your members and let them know what's going on at your sanctuary. Print newsletters are the traditional way of doing this, but e-newsletters are increasingly popular.
3. A simple computer database that keeps track of what you've sent out, who's responding, and what the donations are.

You can make your membership program as simple or as complex as you like. You can invite people to sponsor some of the animals, hold membership drives, and buy mailing lists to gain more members (quite complex). Or you could just have a few kind friends who are committed to helping you pay the bills (quite simple).

Your membership program is the backbone of your fundraising efforts. People give money to something they believe in and to people they



know. Developing your membership is the most important thing you can do in this whole area. Keep your members informed and included in your work. In the beginning, just a one-page letter can keep your members and supporters in touch. As you grow, your literature can expand to a printed newsletter or e-newsletter.

People will support you because they like what you are doing for the animals, so keep that focus in your publications. Stories of your rescues and adoptions are a lot more interesting to your members than details of your board meetings. Ask yourself what you like to read and hear about. We have found that people prefer to be uplifted rather than made to feel guilty by what they read about our work.

Make sure that your publications are appealing and well-prepared. Professional-looking literature conveys to the public that you know what you are doing. If you can, use professional expertise (a graphic or e-newsletter designer). If you don't have the money to spend on such things, ask around. Someone may know someone who's willing to donate their services or perhaps one of your supporters works in graphic design or publishing and can help you put it all together. And print a lot of copies! You need to get the word out about your plans, ideas, and work to as many people as possible.

Keeping your members is as important as recruiting new ones. Send thank-you notes for the donations you receive (no matter how small), provide prompt responses to questions asked, and assist members with animal problems. Dealing with your members in a professional way will give them confidence in your whole operation and ensure that they will continue to support you as best they can.

These days, sophisticated but easy-to-use database programs for the computer make this job a lot easier. Here at Best Friends, we have an office staff to answer mail and send out information to our members. These tasks are as much a part of our work for the animals as feeding and poop-scooping because without our members, we could not do any of it.

Using the telephone. It's a good idea to gather names, addresses and phone numbers anytime you set up a table to disseminate information about your organization to the public. If someone includes a home phone number, give that person a call asking if he or she would like to be a member.

Keep these calls brief, and never pressure people into being part of the work. If they are interested in becoming members, outline the different levels of involvement, so they can choose for themselves.



Your basic rule-of-thumb must always be: Never commit to caring for more animals than you can pay the bills for now.

You might also consider calling people if you haven't heard from them for more than a year. They may simply no longer want to be involved, but often they've moved or have lost the address, so they appreciate the call. We have found that some people respond more to a phone call than to a letter. They like to be called, and they enjoy hearing about our work with the animals.

Using e-mail. E-mail is a very good and inexpensive way of keeping in touch with people. More and more people have access to computers at work and at home, so it makes sense to use this method of communication to inform your members about your work and to solicit support.

Using direct mail. Direct mail programs can help build membership, but they're a slow and expensive operation. If you don't know what you're doing, you can end up losing the money you invested in all the printing and mailing and follow-up that's involved.

People are already receiving more mail than they know what to do with. So, unless you can give them a very compelling reason to support something that's not in their local area and that they've never heard of before, they're unlikely to respond.

Getting publicity for your cause. On the other hand, there are plenty of ways to get the word out in your local region. Heartwarming stories about animals are always welcome on TV and in the local newspapers. Most TV news programs end with a light piece about children, animals, or another human-interest subject.

If you can get your story on TV, make sure you have literature available, so that if people call or

write in, you can get right back to them. (You should also be prepared for people calling simply to ask if you will take their unwanted pet!)

Raising Funds for Special Projects

You'll also need to raise funds for special projects, which might include doing a spay/neuter drive or adding a new building to your sanctuary. Various kinds of fundraising events can help you pay for these special projects. Here are some examples:

Doing bake sales and car washes are good ways to get young people involved. Proceeds will probably not be large, but the events are always fun.

Putting donation cans in stores around the neighborhood draws a small but steady income. You'll need to have someone that you can rely on to go and empty them regularly.

Setting up tables or booths outside popular stores are good ways to meet people, talk about what you're doing, collect donations, and sign up new members all at the same time.

Getting a percentage of one day's profits from a store donated is another option. Stores will often donate a percentage of their sales to benefit the animals. You'll need to help them promote the special day, since the benefit to them is drawing more customers to their store.

Selling products (T-shirts, hats, jewelry and other items) can help raise funds. Many groups use the creative abilities of their supporters in this area.

Doing benefit dinners, dog walks, fashion shows, and other larger-scale events can raise considerable amounts of money, but they also take a lot of time, good planning, advertising and organization.

Every event requires staff or volunteers, and larger events require a lot of coordination. If you're planning a larger event, find someone to coordinate who has experience with putting together these types of events. If you're going to invest a certain

amount of money in putting on the event, you want to ensure that you don't just break even, or lose money.

You might want to start with something simple and low-cost. Setting up a table outside of a busy grocery or pet-supply store is a fairly simple way to generate funds and add valuable names to your membership list. Make the tables look interesting with appealing photos of your rescued animals and lots of literature to give out. Most stores are only too happy to help a community project, but you will need to ask the store manager for permission to set up outside the store. You'll want to respect their wishes about table placement and on how you approach the store's customers. If you develop a good relationship with the store's management, they will be happy to have you return on a regular basis.

Our website has a number of publications on fundraising, including *Getting Your Paws on More Money*, which offers fundraising ideas and tips. Check out the resources in the No More Homeless Pets section:

www.bestfriends.org/nomorehomelesspets/resourcelibrary/fororganizations.cfm



Donations-in-Kind

Many companies are willing to donate goods and materials to a nonprofit organization. (Refer to the guidelines in the sidebar on this page.) For example, lumber companies may donate surplus building materials. Paint and vinyl flooring can be relatively easy to acquire if you are not too fussy about colors or patterns. Many places have end runs or less attractive merchandise that they are happy to donate for a tax write-off. Hotels and motels change their bedding often, and we have found them to be very generous with the old blankets, sheets, and bedspreads. One of our members who loves to sew takes them and creates bed pads for use at the kennels and in the clinic.

Places that are not in a position to donate outright will often give a nonprofit organization a special deal. If you need something for your work with the animals, do some research, then call the company or store with the product you need and ask them to donate it. If that is not possible, ask for a discount or special payment schedule. It never hurts to ask! People enjoy giving, and we have made some very good friends who give regularly. To make your members aware of what items you need, put together a “wish list” and publish the list in your newsletter.

One donation may lead to another. Once we began receiving large donations of pet food, we had a storage problem. One of our members in a nearby city was holding a yard sale for Best Friends and one of her customers expressed interest in our work. They got to talking, and soon the customer promised that her husband would donate a large storage building, which he did, plus he supplied the labor to put it up. You never know whom you will meet at a yard sale!

And sometimes a donation is just serendipitous. When we were building the sanctuary clinic, one of my staff happened to run into a friend who worked at a hospital in a nearby city. She told him that the hospital was about to demolish a wing in order to rebuild it in accordance with the new

Guidelines for asking for donation of products:

1. When you call a store, ask to speak to the person in charge of donating products.
2. Explain what your organization does for animals. Be brief and friendly.
3. Follow up your call with a letter to the person in charge, on letterhead stationery, stating your request to be considered for their donations. If you have your nonprofit 501(c)(3) status, include that in your letter so the company knows it can write their donation off against their taxes.
4. With the letter, send samples of your literature or brochures.
5. If they agree to donate, follow up with a personal letter of thanks to the person in charge.
6. Whatever you are offered, accept it. Be prompt in your pickup of the items. If it is not something you can use, share it with other needy groups or individuals. The company will require you to sign a paper stating that you will not sell the product, but there is nothing to stop you from sharing it, as long as they abide by the same requirement.
7. At the end of the year, remember those who have given to you by sending them a plaque or some small gift. You can also mention their generosity in your newsletter, which will encourage your members to support those businesses.

codes. We obtained permission to go in ahead of the bulldozers, and retrieve whatever we could use. We came away with cupboards, doors, surgical lights, incubators, x-ray viewers, and a variety of other useful equipment. As you can imagine, this was a great boon to our new clinic.

For more information on this topic, check out the No More Homeless Pets Forum called “Getting Stuff Donated.” You’ll find the transcript in the forum archives:

www.bestfriends.org/archives/forums/040405donations.html

Dealing with People

Staff

Caring for animals is a 24/7 job – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Don’t try to do it all yourself – you’ll need help. How much help you’ll need depends on how many animals you will be caring for. People sometimes burn out because they underestimated the stress and work involved in caring for so many lives. You can avoid burnout by getting some help early on.

Although we are doing this work because we love the animals, we also have to work closely with people. I often hear people say that they would rather be around the animals than be with people. This is understandable, given the way some people behave! But, staff are people, and so are the folks who will be coming to you in distress about their failure to keep a pet. And most importantly, your financial supporters are people, too.

So there is no getting away from it – people are going to be central in your efforts to save animals. With that in mind, you will want to have staff and volunteers who are pleasant, articulate and considerate, both in person and on the other end of the phone. Remember, they will be representing your sanctuary.

There is no getting away from it – people are going to be central in your efforts to save animals.

We see a lot of places that have problems in this area. They tend to be not very successful. It is all too easy to allow yourself to become angry and overwhelmed by the public’s disregard for what is so dear to us. But this approach is shortsighted and self-defeating. It is best to adopt a position of kindness and compassion to all – including the people! After all, that is what ultimately helps the animals.

Every encounter is an opportunity to share your philosophy, especially by your example. At the beginning of Best Friends, I was prone to lecture everything that moved! I found that this approach was not very effective, since people would tune me out after a while. Listening, sharing, and being kind seemed to work better. It was not always easy, but I would just remember what was best for the animals in the long run, and bite the bullet, so to speak.

Best Friends employs staff in a variety of areas: animal care, medical care, clerical work, accounting, fundraising, building and grounds maintenance, counseling, outreach programs, adoptions, and education, to name some of them.

Volunteers

Some programs cannot exist without the help of volunteers. In fact, many of them are run entirely by people who volunteer as much time as they can. Even if you have some full-time staff, having volunteers on the team enables you to do more and it’s a wonderful way of including people in your work. Although volunteers are not on the payroll, they do require “payment” of sorts. People like to be noticed and acknowledged for what they contribute; they like to be listened to and appreciated. So, be prepared to show that you value your volunteers. It doesn’t have to be time-consuming or expensive – a simple thank-you can go a long way.

Sometimes a volunteer just doesn’t work out. If you’ve done the best you can to resolve the problem, it may just be that this person is not compat-



ible with your way of working or with the rest of the team. Just because someone is giving their time does not mean that you have to accept their involvement. Thank them for their help, explain that there's a problem (without accusing them of anything), and tell them that you think it's best if they stop working with you. It may be an awkward situation, but the sooner it's done, the better!

For more information, see the Best Friends publication called *Volunteers: Getting Ready for Them, Finding Them, Keeping Them*, which is available in the No More Homeless Pets section of our website. Good and consistent volunteers are like gold and can make a big difference in the success of your program. Treat them well.

Adoptions

Finding a good home for an animal in your charge is a wonderful thing to do. A fact of life in a no-kill sanctuary is that unless animals find homes, they live out their natural lives in your care. This means that you will not be able to respond to other animals who need your help.

Finding new homes for as many animals as possible is a goal we should all pursue. There are many ways to go about doing adoptions. You can adopt out from your own facility, post photos and descriptions of your animals online, and/or use one of the major pet superstore chains that offer space to nonprofit animal groups.

The No More Homeless Pets section of the Best Friends website offers a number of publications about adoption:

www.bestfriends.org/nomorehomelesspets/resourcelibrary/adoptionsindex.cfm

How to Find Homes for Homeless Pets covers some basics in screening for a new home. You are going to be looking for a permanent home for each animal, with people who have the time and money to care for this new member of their family.

As an organization, you will want to work out your procedures for adopting animals. These will include your standards for a new home, any medical guarantees, your return policy, your prohibitions (such as declawing of cats) and much more. Study other organizations' adoption policies, and when you see something you like, ask to use that aspect in your own work. Animal groups will often share their adoption paperwork, such as adoption applications or contracts, as long as you change the name on the documents to your group's name.

You will also want to make sure you have a database, or filing system, to record adoptions, contact information about the adopters, and records of spay/neuter surgeries, vaccinations and microchip identification numbers. At Best Friends, we like

to include a photo of the animal in the adoption records database, since it might be hard to recall each face over time.

Training

Many of the animals coming to your sanctuary will have problems. You will be asked to take biters, chewers, diggers, barkers, and all-around badly behaved dogs. Cats may bite, have litter box problems or other quirky behaviors. It's vital that you work with a trainer to prepare the animals to be successfully re-homed. A lot of behaviors are very responsive to training, and we usually suggest that the adopter find a trainer to continue the training program once the animal is re-homed.

Consult the Yellow Pages for a list of dog trainers in your area, but check them out first to make sure that their training regimens are compatible with your own philosophy. Some people decide to take one of the many courses offered in dog training as part of their preparations in starting a sanctuary. This is a very good plan. Again, check out the courses offered to make sure the methods taught suit your own beliefs in this area.

Breed Rescue

There is a large network of breed rescue groups around the country. If your facility takes in an animal of a particular breed – for example, an Irish wolfhound – a rescue group for that breed may be located nearby. The American Kennel Club (www.akc.org/breeds/rescue.cfm) has an up-to-date list of these groups. Most of them have a waiting list of people looking to adopt.

Giving people the necessary information can often keep pets in their homes.

Networking

At Best Friends we sometimes work with other agencies to place animals. And, on occasion, we have been able to take in unadoptable animals from other groups to live out their lives at the sanctuary. It is a wonderful opportunity to work together for the good of the animals. Obviously this only works well if the groups share the same philosophy and guidelines for adoption.

Education

Humane education is another vital part of your sanctuary work – and not only for children. Every encounter with the public offers an opportunity to educate and inform. A lot of problems people experience with their pets stem from lack of knowledge about the animals and their behavior. So, giving people the necessary information can often keep pets in their homes. Our website contains a section called “You and Your Pets” that offers many downloadable handouts on basic animal care: www.bestfriends.org/theanimals.

Part of your education program could be visiting local schools and sharing your insights about animals and how to take care of them. This can be a fun experience for everyone, and there are a lot of materials available to teach children of all ages. Our humane education director can help you find whatever you need. Another way to educate both children and adults is to have them visit your facility. Taking a guided tour will help them understand some of the problems of unwanted pets firsthand.

Publishing literature that enlightens people about animals and the problems they face can also be part of your education program. For example, there may have been a rash of pet thefts from people's yards in your neighborhood. Getting information out to the community about how to protect their animals is part of educating the public.

Another option is to have an internship program.

In Best Friends' internship program, young people who are interested in careers in the animal field spend time working alongside us at the sanctuary, which gives them good hands-on experience of what is involved.

We also invite people of all ages who are thinking of working in animal welfare to come and spend some time here at the sanctuary to see if this is really what they want to do. This experience often helps people to focus on their goals, and clarify their vision.

In Closing

Know your limits!

Our goal is to provide quality lifetime care for animals who can't find a new home, and quality interim care for the animals waiting to go to a home. But it is not always an easy job. Dealing with painful situations can be very stressful. It helps to have friends with whom to share your feelings and frustrations.

I cannot emphasize this enough. It is only too easy to "burn out" when we see the animals that we dearly love being treated with cruelty and neglect. So don't try and take on the whole burden by yourself. If you become overwhelmed, who else is going to help the animals?

There have been times over the years when I needed that advice myself. Dealing with ignorance is very distressing, especially when it affects the innocent. It is only too easy to slip into negative attitudes and emotions toward those who don't treat their pets with love and respect. But it is a shortsighted approach. Hatred and negativity can eat you up, and soon you will not be able to do the work.

So, share your feelings with those of like mind. Take time out to be good to yourself. Prepare to be doing this work over the long haul, because it will take time to change some people's attitudes toward the animals.

Planning for the future:

Besides knowing what your limits are now, you should also plan for the future.



There will come a day when you can no longer take care of the animals. This

may happen a long time from now, but it could also happen tomorrow. Who will take care of the animals you have rescued?

We hear sad news too regularly of a sanctuary or small rescue group that has failed. Someone else, such as a nearby humane society, has to step in and try and rescue the animals. Perhaps the founder has died or become incapacitated without making provision for the animals. Or maybe he or she got in over his/her head, couldn't say no to taking in more animals, and consequently became overwhelmed.

Early on, you need to have a long-term plan in place for the animals in your care. It is not realistic to think that larger sanctuaries like Best Friends can step in and take in hundreds of new animals when the crisis occurs. (We have our limits, too!)

I recommended earlier that you do not take on the care of more animals than you can afford right now. I know this is hard because the need is so great, but it is even harder to have to cope with a failed situation when so many lives are involved.

So get together with everyone involved in starting up your sanctuary and devise a written plan that covers a variety of eventualities. It can be amended as you go along and as your organization changes, but it will give you some security should a crisis occur.



We're all in this together.

When you're feeling down, remember that we have all come a long way. Spaying and neutering are becoming the norm for the majority of people who have pets. Adopting from a shelter or sanctuary is becoming a cool thing to do. News stories about cruelty to animals draw a huge outcry from the public. More and more people are choosing not to wear fur or eat meat. Large companies that test products on animals are finding themselves hurting in the marketplace as more and more people refuse to buy their products.

There is still a long way to go, of course. But if each of us does what we can to promote a world of compassion and kindness, one day we will see a very different world. It will be a world where we are all living in harmony with each other and with nature. Sounds too good to be true? Maybe, maybe not. We will never know until we try.

Please share your own experiences with us here at Best Friends as you embark upon meeting your goals. And we in turn will share them with others. Together, we will all make the difference.

Best wishes from all of us at Best Friends.

Resources

Adoptions

- Our website has a number of publications about adoption, including *How to Find Homes for Homeless Pets*. You can find them here: www.bestfriends.org/nomorehomelesspets/resourcelibrary/adoptionsindex.cfm
- The No More Homeless Pets Forum archives on the website also provide a wealth of information about adoption. To see the topics that have been covered, go here and click on "Adoptions": www.bestfriends.org/nomorehomelesspets/weeklyforum/forumarchives.cfm
- The AKC keeps up-to-date lists of breed rescue clubs all over the country. You can find the listings on this web page: www.akc.org/breeds/rescue.cfm

Fundraising

- Our website has a number of publications about fundraising, including *Getting Your Paws on More Money*. You can find them here: www.bestfriends.org/nomorehomelesspets/resourcelibrary/fororganizations.cfm
- The No More Homeless Pets Forum archives on the website also provide a wealth of information about fundraising. To see the topics that have been covered, go here and click on "Fundraising": www.bestfriends.org/nomorehomelesspets/weeklyforum/forumarchives.cfm

Humane Education

- For more information about how to develop and run a humane education program, contact the Humane Education Department at Best Friends Animal Society, (435) 644-3965, ext. 4317.



Pet Products

- Doctors Foster and Smith, (800) 826-7206, www.drsfostersmith.com
- Pet Edge, (888) 738-3343, www.petedge.com

Publications

- *Animal People* is an excellent newspaper for everyone who works in the animal field. Newsy and informative, it covers a wide range of topics, from wildlife issues to zoos and marine animals, as well as shelter information, animal rights topics, and vegetarianism. Here's the contact information: Animal People, P.O. Box 960, Clinton, WA 98236-0960, (360) 579-2505, website: www.animalpeoplenews.org.
- *Your Dog* is a monthly 24-page newsletter for dog enthusiasts published by Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine. You can subscribe by calling 800-829-5116. For more information, visit www.tufts.edu/vet/publications/yourdog.
- *Catnip* is a monthly 24-page newsletter for cat enthusiasts published by Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine. You can subscribe by call-

ing 800-829-5116. For more information, visit www.tufts.edu/vet/publications/catnip.

- *Best Friends* magazine includes a lot of stories about animal groups around the world, which helps you keep up with what others are doing as well as stimulating ideas for your own area. People also appreciate the positive approach to animal stories, and the fun style of presentation. Our members like being included in sanctuary news, and meeting the animals who reside here. It creates a personal involvement with them and helps to make rescue and sanctuary work a reality.
- There are many magazines that specialize in specific animals. Many are published by Fancy Publications – *Dog Fancy* and *Cat Fancy*, to name two. They include a lot of useful information on training and medical problems. Even though they are targeted toward the breeding community, these magazines also contain a lot of information that is useful to those of us in animal rescue.

Shelter Operations and Animal Care

- The No More Homeless Pets Forum archives on the website provide a wealth of information. To see the topics that have been covered, go here and click on “Shelter Operations and Animal Care”: www.bestfriends.org/nomorehomelesspets/weeklyforum/forumarchives.cfm

Shelter Planning and Building

- Visit Shelter Planners of America's website: www.shelterplannersofamerica.com
- These No More Homeless Pets Forum archives on the Best Friends website could be helpful: “Designing Shelter Space with Animals in Mind” www.bestfriends.org/archives/forums/110804/shelterspace.html
- “Planning an Animal Shelter” www.bestfriends.org/archives/forums/070504/build.html

Spay/Neuter

- Our website has a number of publications about spay/neuter. Here are a few of the titles: *Nine Model Programs for Highly Successful Spay/Neuter*, *Mobile Spay/Neuter Clinic Operations*, *Public Funding for Spay/Neuter*. You can find them here: www.bestfriends.org/nomorehomelesspets/resourcelibrary/snindex.cfm
- The No More Homeless Pets Forum archives on the website also provide a wealth of information about spay/neuter. To see the topics that have been covered, go here and click on “Spay/Neuter”: www.bestfriends.org/nomorehomelesspets/weeklyforum/forumarchives.cfm

Starting a Nonprofit

- If you want to do the paperwork without the expense of an attorney, Nolo Press has a book called *How to Form a Nonprofit Corporation* that walks you through the steps in straightforward language. For more information, visit their website at www.nolo.com.
- *Starting a Nonprofit Organization to Help the Animals* is a Best Friends publication. You can find it on the website, under “Managing an Animal Welfare Group”: www.bestfriends.org/nomorehomelesspets/resourcelibrary/fororganizations.cfm