

For Better Or Worse...

*Behavioral and Emotional Management
Of Long Term Shelter Dogs*

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c 1998

Introduction:

These pages are designed to give you and your shelter some ideas and ways to better manage and maintain the dogs in your care, whether they are with you a week, a month, a year. We have a commitment to the dogs once they end up in our care, a commitment to ensure they are healthier, happier, BETTER dogs behaviorally, emotionally, physically, and mentally each and every day we choose to keep them alive. Just because we are an animal care facility, does not mean we are in any way exempt from cruelty to animals. Life itself is not automatically better than death. Dogs live in the present. They, (thank God) don't dwell on the past, and, cannot daydream, fantasize, nor hope for a better future. Dogs live in the present, and therefore, at the shelter, it is our commitment that every day is a nourishing and enriched day for the dogs in our care—behaviorally, emotionally, mentally, physically. It is, plain and simple, *cruelty to animals* to let a dog spin obsessively in his own excrement day after day, while we hope that maybe over the weekend someone will come in and adopt that dog.

CHAPTER ONE: *Identifying the Issues:*

After a two or three-day adjustment period, and a full temperament evaluation, you will have a better idea of the behavioral components that make up the shelter dog. This is not only helpful to the potential adopter of the dog, but as a guide for management and behavioral improvements while the dog is sheltered.

It does no good to merely evaluate and identify the dog's behavioral issues—and then let him bark uncontrollably, spin and bounce off the walls for 2 months while he awaits an adoption. There is no behaviorally perfect dog out there, and even that one-in-a-hundred perfect dog will NOT maintain itself emotionally or behaviorally in a shelter WITHOUT proactive help.

A shelter must be proactive in caring for their dogs. Included in the daily schedule of the dogs' physical and nutritional needs, must be a program of behavioral and emotional care. Somehow, each day, we find the time to feed and water and clean up after the dogs. So must we find the time for their behavioral and emotional needs. This booklet will offer practical suggestions.

Common Behavioral Issues for Dogs in Shelters:

- Overall excitability and arousal
- Excitement and frustration
- Lunging at other dogs
- Restraint/Control/Handling problems
- Depression
- Fearfulness/Suspicion towards strangers (the public)
--lunging at the front of cage/kennel
- Elimination problems
- Distress over separation

Maintaining and enhancing each dog's behavior and temperament should be the primary goal for animal shelters. Since behavioral issues and incompatibility are the most common reasons for surrender, (although the owner may describe a sudden "Allergy" or "Moving" into a no-pets residence or "Dog Got Too Big" excuse) keeping and improving the behavior of shelter dogs must be actively addressed *daily*. A shelter should not be a holding warehouse for adoptable dogs, but rather a boarding and training facility.

Common Concerns for Future Owners:

1. Congeniality and high thresholds for all aggression
1. Overall manners/physical control and handleability
2. Compatible personality and temperament with owner's dreams and needs
3. Dog's attentiveness and willingness to learn
4. Housebreakability
5. Ability to leave dog alone in home without problems
6. Ongoing support from the shelter

Addressing These Concerns At the Shelter:

1. Conducting temperament evaluations to get a better understanding of every adoption dog; Possession Aggression Prevention Program; pleasant, positive encounters with all shelter employees.
2. Physical control exercises; leash manners; introducing dogs to training and learning.
3. Temperament and personality evaluations on each dog.
4. Use food treats to reward attention, focus, quiet, calm, sitting for greeting and sitting before exiting kennel.
5. If dogs are kept 100% indoors or 100% outdoors, making sure they have two different surfaces: one for elimination, one for sleeping/eating. Crate training for dogs who needs more confinement; frequent baths for dirty dogs.
6. Piping in soft, calming music; (classical or nature sounds) lights out when night falls; Real Life Room for practicing departures.
7. The goal of the animal shelter is to become the behavioral and training resource in the community. The public must consider calling the shelter not as a last resort before surrender, but to ask questions and get knowledgeable advice to help keep their dog.

CHAPTER TWO: ***MAKING LIFE BETTER FOR THE DOGS***

Ask yourself a question: When you go away on vacation, do you leave your dogs at a boarding kennel? Ask some of your co-workers. You'll find that most animal shelter personnel and most dog trainers do not leave their dogs in a boarding kennel when they travel. Why? Most answer that their dogs are too used to being pampered, too used to being indulged, or privileged, and would be stressed in a boarding kennel.

So why do we find it acceptable to keep shelter dogs—who have no owner, who have no-one who adores them, who have no-one who spoils them, no-one who calls them the apple of their eye—in boarding kennels--day after day, week after week, month after month, and sometimes, year after year? The emperor is wearing no clothes! Kennels are a difficult place for dogs to live. A concrete run, no matter how clean and sterile, with a barking dog to your left and a barking dog to your right, is not a home. In many cases, it is not even humane.

Every shelter dog needs:

- A bed (I don't care if he chews his bedding, craps on it every night, shreds it, urinates on it, or chooses to push it away. Every dog must have something soft to lie on.)
- Toys (The animal shelter is a highly competitive, high-stress environment for dogs, especially puppies and adolescents. I believe that if dogs spend any more than a couple of weeks in a shelter without toys, it can predispose newly adopted dogs to covet, if not guard their new toys from their new owners. Shelter dogs should be saturated with things to chew and gnaw and play with. Toys can be rotated every few days, bones can be stuffed with different flavors [peanut butter, cream cheese, canned dog food, etc.] Rawhides are especially important.
- To be given a *name*. (A dog can learn a new name within a few days, and I believe having a name while at the shelter and having to re-learn a new one when adopted is less stressful than not having a name at all until finally adopted.)
- To be petted, and in direct human contact, *DAILY*.
- If kenneled outdoors, then to come indoors, *DAILY*.
- If kenneled indoors only, then to enjoy the great outdoors, *DAILY*.
- To have the lights off at night, and to be able to sleep deeply and uninterrupted.
- To be clean and dry. (No dog should have to endure being covered in excrement, or wet from cleaning and hosing techniques on a daily basis. If a shelter dog spends weeks at a time coated in feces and urine, how can we expect that dog to be housebroken in his next home?)
- To have his emotional and mental needs addressed on a daily basis.

THE ADOPTION HOLODECK: *A Real-Life Room for Dogs in Shelters*

Imagine spending month after month in a concrete kennel run, with chain-link as your only view, loud, echoey ceilings, wet, bleachy walls, a dog to your right, a dog to your left, uproarious barking many times a day whenever someone walks in front of your cage, or feeds the dogs, or walks past with another dog and frustrates you. Imagine the relentless agitation and arousal, the constant excitement with no real relief.

Consider creating an Adoption Holodeck—a Real-Life Room for dogs in shelters, a private and personal respite from the tension of the kennels. A Real Life Room can be inexpensively put together with some imagination, creativity and donated items, and the room does not have to be huge—just quiet and comforting and homey. Shelters must realize that the mental and emotional well-being of the animals in their care is as, if not more, important than their physical requirements.

The Real Life Room is an excellent place for older, more mature dogs, the ones often previously pampered and who are devastated by the kennels. Consider rotating some of the older dogs to sleep in the room overnight. The Real Life Room is also the ideal place for the public to visit and view the older dogs, who may not look very appealing in the kennels, next to all the lively young puppies. The benefits of adopting a mature dog are highlighted when these dogs are viewed and bonded with in the Real Life Room—the older dogs are quiet and calm, no destructiveness, no housebreaking problems, they don't bark and can be left alone with the TV on while the owners are at work.

The Real Life Room can be used to help staff assess more accurately what a shelter dog is like indoors, if it has ever lived indoors before, what the dog is like when left alone unattended, and to help staff familiarize and remind dogs how to live in a home with furniture, a TV, a stereo, a refrigerator, a trash can. It's hard for a dog to spend day in and day out in the kennels and remember his indoor house manners. Dogs can be rotated in and out of the Real Life Room, giving them a much-needed break from the kennels.

THINGS TO PROGRAM INTO YOUR HOLODECK:

- ◆ Comfy furniture (overstuffed chairs can be covered with a sheet for easy laundering)
- ◆ Common appliances found in a home: a TV, a stereo, a refrigerator, a vacuum...
- ◆ A dog bed and a small, washable throw-rug. (dogs miss soft things when kenneled)
- ◆ A Dutch door (so the public can view and interact with social, affectionate dogs; so mildly shy dogs don't have to meet and greet strangers when they feel cornered in a cage; so people can reach over and give the dogs a treat; so dogs don't feel as isolated)
- ◆ Real, live people to sit with, eat a sandwich with, watch TV with, ***so it's not so lonely without a real home!***

CHAPTER THREE: *MAKING THE BEST OF YOUR PHYSICAL FACILITY*

Physical Placement of Dogs in Kennels:

We all inherit our physical facilities, and so must make-do with our kennels. What we *can* change and modify are the emotional and behavioral needs of the dogs.

To keep arousal and excitement levels at their lowest, it is important to take into consideration the individual temperament of all dogs in the shelter, and to ensure they are housed in the most appropriate kennels available.

Take a walk around the kennels. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Which of your kennel runs have the most dog-traffic passing in front of them? (I.e. dog walkers' route to exercise yards, or routes dog walkers or kennel staff take to bring dogs outside the kennels.)
2. Which kennel runs have the *least* direct visual access to the public passing by?
3. Which kennel runs have the *least* direct visual access to other kennel runs and other dogs?
4. Which kennel runs are the *first* the public passes and are most brightly and cheerfully lit?

1. For the Kennels with the least dog traffic passing in front:

The calmest and least arousable, least dog-aggressive dogs should be in these spaces. The constant, daily barrage of passing dogs can, within a few days of kenneling, frustrate a gentle, dog-friendly dog and make him lunge and bark when kenneled. (And eventually on leash with other dogs he can't get to.)

Younger, more impressionable dogs (juveniles under 8 months or so) are usually good with other dogs, but if placed in a high dog-traffic kennel, or placed in between or next to a lunging, over-excitabile or dog-aggressive dog, can learn to lunge and growl and become inappropriate with other dogs.

It is important to try to maintain the shelter dogs that are basically dog-friendly but easily aroused/frustrated by passing dogs in play groups on a daily basis, or at least 3-4 times a week.

Beware the dogs that are doubled up with other dogs. When a passing dog arouses these dogs, sometimes one "unloads" or attacks or menaces another dog in his run. These dogs should be separated immediately. Life is no fun when you're terrified of your housemate.

Dogs who are fine with other dogs off-leash in play groups, but who are lunging or out of control with dogs in their kennels or while on leash, can be placed on leash at the *end* of the play session. At first, for just a few seconds and then for longer and longer periods, the dog can be asked to sit neutrally, on a loose lead, and then to walk away from the play session, on lead. As the sit-neutrally period gets longer (up to 20 seconds or longer) treats can be used to ask the dog to sit and also watch the handler. Later, the dog can be rewarded for seeing and letting other dogs play, but not getting so frustrated as to lunge or bark. It's also important to reward the dog for preferring to be with humans, rather than believing that dog play groups are the most fun thing in the world.

Kennel runs with the *most* dog traffic passing in front should be reserved for dogs that ignore other dogs, or dogs that care only for people, or don't consider dogs at all when they pass.

2. Kennels With the Least Direct Visual Access to Public:

Although you may think they need “socialization” or more exposure to the public since they may be difficult to adopt—dogs who are suspicious of strangers (the public) or lunge/bark/growl/snarl at the front of their kennels when new people pass by or stop by, should NOT be allowed to do this. Practice makes perfect: every time a shelter dog lunges at a person who visits or passes their kennel run, that dog is practicing aggression to strangers. This can translate to serious problems when the dog gets adopted, particularly if the dog has spent significant time in a shelter. The problems likely to occur are aggression when visitors or service people come to the house, and/or territorial type aggression when the dog is fenced, tied or sometimes, it can indicate that the dog might lunge at passers-by when on lead and out for a walk. Again, practice makes perfect—what starts out as lunging or growling (even though the dog is “fine when he’s out of the kennels”) will quickly, when the dog is given the chance, can progress into snapping, nipping, biting.

Aggression to strangers can be hard to predict in the kennels: The shelter dog often bonds closely with a few kennel employees, and seems “fine” once he is out of his kennel run. While sheltered, the dog never actually bites anyone—that’s usually because he can’t—he’s caged! But he could be a huge liability when/if he gets adopted. After a few weeks in a new home, after he’s had a chance to root in, get comfortable in his new territory, and bond closely with his new owner, the first Con Edison man, UPS delivery person, or guest on the property or in the doorway could be nailed.

Don’t let the new adopter find out something this risky AFTER adopting. Get the dog out; see if outside of his enclosed kennel run the dog greets people more readily. Change this dog’s territory every few days, so he doesn’t get rooted into one particular kennel run. Teach this dog to sit for a treat each and every time staff and volunteers pass in front of his kennel. Starting with familiar people at the shelter approaching, commanding the dog to “sit”, then following through with a yummy treat for sitting. Everyone should be instructed NOT to give the dog a treat if he barks, growls, lunges forward, or backs away.

A Note on Aggression:

If you have a dog that is aggressive or shows aggressive displays towards people, he must not be allowed to practice this. Move this dog to a quieter wing of the shelter. Move this dog out of adoptions! You cannot ask the general public to adopt a dog whose behavior problems are not clearly understood, and whose aggression has not been diagnosed, defined, and all its triggers identified.

The people who come to your shelter to adopt a dog are the *lowest level* dog-experienced people. They are looking for a pet, a companion. They are not looking to adopt a dog that has bitten and will bite again, and will need professional management FOR LIFE. Just because someone doesn't have children, and he or she have owned a dog before, does NOT make them experienced enough and suitable to bring home a difficult dog. If your shelter doesn't have the expertise, personnel, or time to work with difficult dogs, then don't put them up for adoption.

Dangerous dogs should never be up for adoption. The general public coming in to adopt a dog is neither capable of handling nor seeking to adopt a biting dog and liability. An unfair, dangerous adoption is not a better option than euthanasia, no matter how anybody feels about euthanasia. The biting dog usually ends up having to be euthanized anyway, by the adopter, after a period of heartbreak, or crisis, and long after they have become emotionally attached to the dog. Shelter staff and volunteers must gather expertise and knowledge about dog behavior and behavior problem solving, in order to understand *first-hand*, which dogs can be worked with and treated, and which dogs are dangerous for life.

3. Which kennels have the least direct visual access to other kennel runs and other dogs?

One of the unfortunate by-products of life at the shelter, is the loss of the ability to calm down. The arousal levels are so high at the shelter, the constant excitement is so great, dogs that spend more than a few weeks at an ordinary shelter tend to raise their basic arousal and recovery levels. They actually lose the ability they had when they first arrived to settle and be calm.

Dogs who are over-stimulated to begin with, and highly reactive, need calm and mellow surroundings. They need immediate gratification for their curiosity. They need immediate activities to occupy their environment: daily training sessions, rotating toys, chewies, stuffed animals to pick apart, etc. Calming classical music or nature sounds should be playing at a moderate volume near these kennels to block out other stimuli.

4. Which kennels are the first the public passes, and the most brightly and cheerfully lit?

It is said that people will adopt a dog from the first ten that they see, even if there are a hundred up for adoption, and they look at all the dogs. Some emotional connection happens within the first few dogs. Without that almost “chemical” connection that people describe in selecting their dog, you won’t convince someone to adopt a dog, even if temperamentally you know a particular dog is *perfect* for that person. If they don’t feel the chemistry, it’s not the right dog. Think about it, how did you choose the dog *you* adopted?

Put your best and most well behaved dogs in the first few runs. If you have really nice tempered, well-behaved dogs but they are big and dark or plain looking, keep them up front, in brightly and well-lit kennels, so the public can clearly see them, and see them early on in their search.

Remember, the more successful adoptions we make, the more GREAT dogs are matched with great people, the more people will think of the shelter as the premiere place to get a dog.

CHAPTER FOUR: *PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS*

CRATE TRAINING:

Do you recommend crate training to some of your adopters? If you are going to recommend crate training for a particular dog (when he gets adopted) then consider crate training the dog yourselves, WHILE HE'S AT THE SHELTER. It's actually easier to crate train a dog while he is at the shelter since he is not completely bonded to any one person, so will feel less separation distress when crated. It's easier on the adopter as well, many people are reluctant to use a crate, or unfamiliar with crate training. Some feel it's cruel. It's much easier for those people to accept the concept of crating, and give it a try if you tell them that the dog they've adopted is already crate trained, in fact *likes* his crate. Both the dog and the owner will suffer less anxiety when the dog is adopted and then has to be left alone while they go to work. It's hard to train a new behavior when everybody (canine and human) is stressed. When the shelter has already crate trained the dog, the adopters will be more likely to try using a crate, and the chances for a permanent, successful adoption are greatly increased.

Which dogs should be targeted for crate training?

- Young dogs (less than two years)...
- Active and playful, rambunctious dogs (who will play with furniture, pillows, books, magazines, eyeglasses, etc.)...
- Prey-driven, mouthy dogs (who could gut a couch in less than 2 minutes!)...
- Un-housebroken, un-clean dogs...

...Should all be crate trained while residing at the shelter!

Dogs should never be crated for a period of time longer than they can hold their bladder and bowels. The rule of thumb for puppies is: ‘the age of the puppy in months plus one’ is the longest period of time he can humanely stay in a crate: i.e. a four month old puppy can stay in a crate comfortably for five hours, etc. This rule holds true up to eight months—then no dog should be crate for more than nine hours at a stretch, for any number of days in a row.

Crate training at the shelter is best done in little bits of time: a one hour nap here, an overnight there, a ten minute, chew-on-a-new-rawhide stretch here, a half-hour, lick-out-a-marrow-bone bit there.

Crates should all have soft blankets for the dogs to lie on, and toys or chewies for the dogs to play with. A small bucket of water can be clipped to the door of the crate, so the dog/puppy has access to fresh water. A crate can be kept inconspicuously behind the front counter or next to an employee’s desk, and after a tiring exercise session, a shelter dog can be given a bone and crated while a staff person works.

Words of Caution:

No dog should be crated with a choke-type collar on. No dog should be crated with a leash attached to his collar. Crating should never be a punishment. Crating should never be unpleasant, or frightening. Crating should never be for longer than a dog can hold his bladder and bowels. All dogs should be supervised when first crated to ensure they are not panicking. Not all dogs will take readily to a crate; some panic and can actually harm themselves trying to escape. Never force a dog into a crate. Never lock a panicking dog in a crate. For dogs who don’t take readily to the crate, try the following suggestions: Detach the door to the crate and put comfortable bedding and a few treats in the back. Leave the door-less crate in the kennel run with the dog, feed him in there for a few days and see if he slowly acclimates.

Physical Control, Structure, Guidance **And Being Made to Do Something They Don't** **Want to Do!**

Although life at the shelter can be hellish for dogs, something else more insidious, subtler about being kenneled, can affect them adversely. Day after day, week after week, the shelter dog goes in and out of his kennel, through his doggie-door, gets leash-walked by volunteers, gets biscuits from passers-by, gets fed twice a day, gets cleaned up after. He seems like a nice dog, he wags his tail, he is friendly to all staff and volunteers, and friendly to the public that comes to visit. He was “fine” for his initial in-take health exam and vaccinations. Then he gets adopted and two weeks later gets returned for biting his new owners. How could this be? How could the shelter have had him so long, and had no problems? Why didn't the shelter staff get bitten?

Some dogs are congenial and easy-going UNTIL *you make them do something they don't want to do*. This is sometimes referred to as “dominance aggression”. It is a very hard behavior problem to flush out at the shelter, since, by definition, dominance aggression is characterized by aggression to family members in the home. Shelter dogs usually are not in the shelter long enough for it to become “home” and the staff and volunteers to become “family”. And if they are at the shelter a long time, we still don't live in the kennel run with the dog, 24 hours a day, sharing a living and sleeping place, sharing toys, competing for food and snacks. AND WE RARELY MAKE THE SHELTER DOG DO ANYTHING HE REALLY DOESN'T WANT TO DO. This is the only time you'll experience dominance problems.

This can especially be a problem for young puppies at the shelter. Some bold, sassy, full-of-themselves puppies, alone in the kennels, without human limits and structure and guidance and physical control—can, within days, become out of control and over-stimulated by any attempt at control or attention. Even a moderately confident puppy can quickly lose control of his inhibitions when he has nothing but excitement and freedom in his kennel.

Only a home and a real, live owner can mimic a home and a real, live owner! So what can we do at the shelter to predict, assess, and maintain a dog's ability to accept human guidance, handling, and limits?

I believe shelter dogs need to be made to do something they don't want to do, for no particular reason except that it will be humane and fair, and because you say so. The simplest activity that also has applications to real-life is a gentle, physical examination.

A Daily Program

For Making the Dog Do Something He Doesn't Want To Do:

- Bring the dog out of the kennels to a quiet, calm location
- Place one hand through his collar, under his chin, and the other hand gently under his belly, blocking his back legs, preventing any forward movement or sitting
- Gently and calmly require the dog to stand up and stand still, facing a direction of your arbitrary choice
- For a few seconds at a time, take away the hand that is under his belly, and examine, slowly and deliberately, different parts of the dog's body
- Examine the teeth and gums, then return the hand under the dog's belly to keep him still and standing up
- Examine each ear, and massage the bases
- Examine each eye closely
- Run your hands slowly and firmly down each leg, one at a time, ending up grasping each paw for a second or two (between each leg, return your hand to the dog's belly to prop him up again)
- Stroke the dog's coat against the grain, as if to check for fleas or flea dirt
- Touch the dog's tail, starting at the base and slowly stroking to the tip
- Lift the tail and briefly glance at his anus
- Stroke down his back from his shoulders to the base of his tail, stroke slowly, firmly, deeply—it should feel good to the dog
- End the session when the dog is calm
- Praise quietly and calmly DURING the exam, and don't celebrate when it's over—the dog should learn to accept the exam, not have a party when it's over
- This can be a good time to brush/groom the dog
- This isn't a *training* exercise, as much as it is a handling and “concept” exercise

CALM DOWN TIME:

Dogs that are sheltered long-term often lose the ability to calm down. They are so frequently aroused they almost can't recover to their previous, base level calm. The kennels are a hard place to live.

Although it's probably impossible to achieve the ideal, the goal of the shelter is to keeping excitement levels and bursts of arousal to a minimum. Each and every time all the dogs go crazy when one dog is leashed and walked down the aisles, excitement peaks, and it damages their ability to then calm back down.

Try, as much as humanly possible, to not walk a dog down the aisles (running the barking gauntlet) while all the dogs are indoors and poised and ready to react. Try to cover up the front of the runs of the worst arousers, or let them out and close the guillotine doors, if possible.

Calm Down Time:

- Take one dog at a time to a quiet, non-distracting area AWAY from the kennels and other dogs
- Sit with the dog, give him a short lead
- Do nothing for a few minutes, just sit calmly, restricting his available roaming area with the short leash
- Wait him out, just wait until he eventually begins to calm down, to settle, and sigh, and maybe sit or lie down
- Slowly reach over and stroke his back, with the grain of the hair, extremely slowly and soothingly
- Very quietly praise him for settling
- Ignore him sometimes, too. This is his time to calm down, give him some space and silence
- Teach him that when he's with people he doesn't always have to be *doing* something
- When was the last time he did NOTHING out of his kennel?

DOG PLAY GROUPS:

Dog play groups are a great way to keep young shelter dogs social with other dogs, give them excellent aerobic exercise, and satisfy their need for companionship. If your shelter is in an urban area where many of your adopters will be leash walking their dogs around other dogs, and/or taking their dogs to dog-parks, then play groups at the shelter will be almost a necessity. Dog play groups helps with assessing dog-dog sociability, as well as creating and maintaining dog-friendly pets.

Please be careful with any dogs over a year old, of unknown background and history. A lot of the literature and materials in the dog world regarding dog play groups are not applicable to animal shelters, where many of the dogs are not socialized, but rather encouraged to fight. Breed prejudices aside, use caution including the bull breeds and the terriers and some of the larger working/guarding breeds in dog play groups. Some of these dogs have been bred for dog-dog aggression and play VERY rough, at best. If a dog is mature and athletic enough to kill another dog in a play group, and you don't know his history don't put him in! If you are unsure of your ability to assess dog-dog aggression, it's better to be safe than sorry.

A Formula for Safe and Successful Play Groups:

- Try play groups of two or three dogs at a time, at first
- Supervise! Have two people supervise at first in case you need to break up a serious fight
- Let leashes drag (on buckle collars only) at first
- Opposite sex (if sterilized) a good choice for older (>1 year) dogs
- If worried, have two volunteers each walk a dog with brief play periods during the walk, then take to play yard
- Keep small dogs with small or very young dogs (don't ever mix toy dogs with large dogs. The frustration of being in the kennels can cause a big dog to "unload" and kill/attack a toy dog)
- Place bold, bully young puppies with appropriate adults for a play time, so they're not growing up thinking they are king of the world
- Don't let inappropriate puppies play inappropriately with other puppies, get them a new, older, more appropriate playmate
- Every play period should benefit all dogs
- Play groups should attempt to be educational for the dogs, not just great exercise and fun
- Remember—some dogs just don't want to play, and that's okay!

CONCLUSION:

Running an animal shelter is like hopping aboard a speeding locomotive each day: every minute is a blur of telephone calls, surrenders, strays, incoming, outgoing, veterinary crises, personnel problems, interruptions, anger, grief, stress—and then at the end of the day you hop off. It's hard to complete a task, follow through with a project, because each day is so frantic. And yet, at the end of the day, shelters have managed to feed, water, clean and care for every animal.

But some train stops were missed.

The locomotive sped past the stop where mental health resides. And the locomotive sped past the stop where the emotional well being of the animals lives. And the locomotive missed altogether the stop for behavioral care.

Before turning off the lights and locking up at the end of each day, walk through the kennels, look at each dog individually, and ask yourself two questions:

1. Is this dog a better dog emotionally, mentally and behaviorally, *TODAY*, than yesterday?
2. Is this dog a better dog emotionally, mentally and behaviorally, *TODAY*, than the day he arrived?

Make it so.