

Potter League for Animals Position on Homeless Pet Owners

The Potter League for Animals is committed to developing, advocating and supporting services and programs that help keep homeless people with their pet(s).

I. Why do it?

It is estimated that up to 24% of the homeless people in the United States have pets. In many cases, their need for animal companionship is just as important to them as food and shelter. Programs that reduce relinquishments driven by the inability to provide necessary pet care enrich the lives of both the owner and their pet(s).

II. Pros

- *Programs that help ensure pets remain with their owners, regardless of their financial or other circumstances, are key to:*
 - *Affording the opportunity for all to experience the unconditional love of a pet and the joy, support and comfort they can bring*
 - *Reducing relinquishment of pets to shelters*
 - *Making it more likely that those owners will avail themselves of other needed social services*
 - *Keeping pets healthy and providing for their basic needs while being with their owner(s)*
 - *Preventing the stressful experience, to owner and pet, that comes with relinquishment/rehoming*

III. Cons

- *Without the aid of support programs, access to food and routine veterinary care is uncertain and unfavorable outcomes are more likely*
- *Persons experiencing homelessness may not have access to a full range of social services because they choose to keep their pets*
- *Due to lack of financial resources, necessary care for animals may potentially be delayed*
- *Determining how to appropriately target care to communities and individuals with the most need for veterinary care and food can be challenging and programs can be costly*
- *Pets that do not receive necessary veterinary care due to financial circumstances are often relinquished and the financial burden to provide that care is passed on to shelters*

IV. Conclusion

Studies have shown the positive emotional impact that pets have is particularly important for vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, children and the homeless

and that there is no correlation between income and a pet owner's desire and commitment to provide necessary care for their companion animals. The Potter League for Animals is committed to developing and supporting programs that assist those in financial need to obtain food and affordable veterinary care for their pet(s) and advocates for human services and related state agencies to consider pets when responding to people in need.

References:

ASPCA Position Statement on Keeping Pets and People Together

National Coalition on Homelessness

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Access to Veterinary Care Coalition (AVCC) Report dated December 17, 2018 conducted in collaboration with the Center for Applied Research and Evaluation (CARE) located at the University of Tennessee.