

'Sad' statistics on cats

By Jane Weatherford

Brown County Humane Society



Cat owners don't care as much about their pets as dog owners do. Dogs are more valued than cats. Cat owners are irresponsible. Cats get lost easier than dogs.

Looking at the statistics at the Brown County Humane Society Animal Shelter, one might draw the above conclusions. For the first three months of this year ZERO cats have been returned to their owners. During that same period of time 19 dogs were returned to their owners. Last year 17 percent (120) of all the dogs entering the shelter were returned to their owners while only 4 percent (20) of cats were. Why the dramatic difference?

Last year 303 stray cats entered the animal shelter and only 20 were reclaimed by their owners. Approximately 85 percent of cats entering the shelter appear to be socialized to people. They are friendly, allow the shelter staff to pet them and many crave human attention. They reach out of their cages as people walk by just asking to be noticed. These cats were owned by someone at some point in their lives or they would not be so friendly. So why don't their owners come looking for them?

One day a few months ago, Scott was driving out of our driveway and saw a beautiful orange tabby cat. He stopped the car expecting the cat to run away but hoping to coax the kitty to him. He was pleasantly surprised when the cat walked right up to him and rubbed against his legs. Scott gently picked the cat up and brought it to the house. We looked the kitty over and she seemed to be in good health. Her hair was thick and well groomed. Her eyes and ears were clear and clean. She was in good condition, not too skinny and not too fat. We were just sure someone would be looking for her.

We made flyers with her picture and posted them on either end of our road and we placed flyers in the local grocery store and at the veterinarian's office. We gave flyers to our postal person, and to the UPS and FedEx drivers. We called the neighbors. We called the shelter and e-mailed the flyer to them. Finally we decided to keep her at our house until the owner called to claim her. With all the effort of passing out flyers and telling everyone we knew about her, we were sure it would just be a day or two before the owner called. A few weeks went by and it became obvious that no one was looking for this sweet, loving cat.

Because we already had two cats and three dogs and the new kitty didn't seem to enjoy being around other pets, we took her to the shelter. She was so friendly to us. Each time you sat down to relax she'd jump into your lap and begin "kitty kneading" on your belly. She was a very friendly cat and obviously was used to being around people. I was sure she would soon be adopted.

After a few weeks in the shelter, Jaime, the shelter manager, called and said Copper was not adjusting well to cage life. She was very unhappy and had begun hissing and snapping at the staff. The shelter veterinary technician spent some time with Copper and concluded that she was very stressed due to being in the shelter and surrounded by so many other cats. The vet tech felt like Copper would be fine in a home environment but just could not handle being caged. I wondered... Where was Copper's owner? Did they have any idea what this poor cat was going through? Did they care?

With all my heart I know that Copper was raised by a loving human family. She is too

comfortable around people not to have been owned by a family at some time in her life. Where were they now? Why didn't they look for Copper? Why didn't Copper have a tag on her? Why wasn't she micro-chipped? Did her family miss her? She sure seemed to miss them. I can't answer any of these questions about Copper's family or about the 283 stray cats that were not reclaimed by their owners at the shelter last year. I do know that a quick call to the shelter would have reunited Copper to her family and saved her the stress of shelter life.

Fortunately for Copper she is now in a foster home until the perfect family can be found for her. She is safe, but not all family-friendly cats are so lucky. Please if your cat goes missing call the shelter at 988-7362. It just takes a minute and could save your cat's life.