

Economy hurts animal world too

By Wayne Peal
staff writer

Without checking the headlines, Michigan Humane Society officials can tell the economy is in a recession.

That's because society shelters are rapidly filling with unwanted pets.

"I'd say our intake is up substantially over last year," said Sherry Silk, director of central operations for metro area MHS shelters.

The first several months of the year are traditionally a busy time for area shelters, as pet owners abandon animals given as holiday gifts. This year, however, the situation has been compounded by the economic slowdown.

"Here (at the main shelter) in Detroit, we're hearing so many stories of people who have lost their jobs and are giving up their pets," Silk said.

MORE THAN 200 animals are available for adoption at MHS shelters in Detroit, Rochester Hills and Westland, Silk said, an increase of more than 10 percent from this time one year ago.

"Included in that, we have about 10 to 12 purebred dogs," she said. "And you rarely see that many up for adoption."

Despite the rising number of available pets, the MHS remains selective about the people who seek to adopt animals placed in its care.

"**WE WANT them to go to people** who will be good, responsible pet owners," she said.

Toward that end, the MHS screens potential pet owners through a written questionnaire, verbal interview and inquiries about the health of other pets.

The MHS rejects about "one in 10" people who seek to adopt pets, Silk said, though reasons can vary.

Animals won't go to people with a history of abusing other pets, she said.

New boss on campus Friday

Continued from Page 5

market place?"

Fulton said she expects to be a good listener, particularly as she gets into the job at OCC. "I expect to meet with small groups of faculty and staff to get their views."

"I'm also anxious to meet with community leaders," she said, "to see how they view OCC and how we can better meet their needs."

said, "If they've had three or four other pets who have been hit by a car, then we won't let them adopt," Silk said.

Nor will animals go to people who use them for anything other than a pet.

"We're not going to allow adoption to someone who's going to keep a dog chained outside as a watchdog," she said. "We want them to become part of the family."

MHS officials would rather see an animal destroyed than go to an irresponsible owner, Silk said.

"Our feeling is it would be better for an animal to be destroyed humanely than to be hit by a car," she said.

IN 1989, the agency took in 46,741 pets, Silk said. Of those, 6,958 were adopted.

"Some of the others were returned to the owners — this is especially common in suburban areas," Silk said. "The rest, unfortunately, were humanely destroyed."

Adoptions, through the Animal Welfare Society, another animal protection agency, haven't increased since this time last year, according to a spokeswoman.

The society is an affiliation of area veterinary hospitals, including Kershaw Animal Hospital, Livonia and Bloom Animal Hospital in Livonia. Unlike the MHS, it doesn't destroy animals, however, it handles a much smaller volume of pets.

At present, 14 puppies and six cats are available through society offices.

Like the MHS, the society requires adoptees to sign an agreement calling for humane treatment of the animal and requires pets be kept indoors.

While puppies and kittens are adopted out of veterinary offices, adult pets are adopted through the owners homes.

Owners can reject applicants on their own, the spokeswoman said.

Mindful of the economic downturn, Fulton said another priority will be curbing costs and delivering services more efficiently.

Fulton has leased an apartment in West Bloomfield and expects to be completely moved by early next week. "I expect to buy a house eventually, but I wanted an apartment until I get acclimated to the area."



Tonya Harper and her grandmother, Catherine Harper, found Tonya's recently lost her dog of many years and her granddaughter talked her into adopting a replacement.

Incinerator foes attack county newsletter

Continued from Page 1

Among them is Patsy Orter-Mukavitz, a nurse living in Madison Heights.

"I work at my job and I go to meetings on my own time to express my views," Orter-Mukavitz said Thursday during the public comment section of the regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners. "And this newsletter, funded with tax money, advises how to control my protest."

SHE IS A member of Clean Air Please, one of several groups opposed to either or both of the incinerators.

Commissioner David L. Moffitt, of Farmington Hills, subsequently introduced a motion to suspend the "Solid Waste Management News" until he and his colleagues can review its intent, purpose, editorial content and effectiveness.

The move is endorsed by Republican commissioners Donald W. Jen-

son of Birmingham, Thomas A. Law of West Bloomfield, Marilyn E. Gosling of Bloomfield Hills and Donald E. Bishop of Rochester Hills.

Moffitt's resolution was to be discussed in committee this week for possible action at next week's board meeting.

"The article is insulting," said Moffitt. "It implies that those opposed to the incinerators deserve to be managed, or treated differently. Government is supposed to encourage people to participate."

Ann Hobart, a former county commissioner who is now the public information specialist for the solid waste plan, termed the article a "mistake."

"SOME COMMUNITIES asked for some advice about handling lengthy and sometimes loud meetings," she said. "It was meant to be helpful, but obviously some people don't see it that way. We didn't mean to offend anyone."

"It was a mistake and won't happen again."

Hobart said her office takes responsibility for the article, although it was actually written by the Farmington Hills public relations team as part of a \$150,000 public information contract.

They work for us," said Hobart. "But we the department of public works are responsible for its content."

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