

Alternatives to Surrendering Your Cat

By now, you have no doubt made the difficult decision to surrender your pet to the Eau Claire County Humane Association. However, we ask that you take some time to read over these materials to consider your other options. Surrendering your cat is a serious decision and should only be made after exploring other alternatives and with a complete understanding of the process and potential outcomes.

Ask yourself (honestly): ***Why are you surrendering this pet?***

My landlord/homeowner will not allow the cat

- It is possible, with planning and perhaps a few compromises, to find pet-friendly housing almost anywhere.
- Get a of local pet-friendly housing in the Eau Claire area on our website www.eccha.org
- Visit www.RentWithPets.org, which is a great resource that thoroughly outlines how to find a pet-friendly home.

My cat has behavioral problems OR My cat will not use the litter box

- Have your cat examined by a veterinarian. Behavioral problems are sometimes linked to a treatable medical condition. For example, a cat that has begun urinating outside the litter box may have a urinary tract infection that can be treated.
- Contact a feline behavior specialist to discuss your cat's behavior problems and solutions to the situation. For example, many cats reported to have litter box problems are actually reacting to a box that is simply too dirty or is not set up to their liking. Providing an appropriate, clean litter box situation has solved many such problems. For a list of local trainers and behavior specialists, go to our website www.eccha.org or search online or in the yellow pages.
- Review our helpful feline behavior articles available on our website at www.eccha.org or explore the Internet to look for other feline behavior resources.
- Contact Cats International, a Wisconsin-based non-profit organization, for behavioral advice at (262)375-8852, or visit their website at www.catsinternational.org for articles on how to solve feline behavior issues.

If you have tried everything to address behavioral problems or non-use of the litter box with your cat, please be aware that if your cat is surrendered to ECCHA, it is likely that our only option will be to humanely euthanize the cat. Because we do not want your pet to be in the hands of strangers when this happens, we always recommend that you take your animal to your regular veterinarian so that you can be with you feline companion during this traumatic event.

Me or someone in my family is allergic to my cat

Usually, allergies are caused by pet dander, not the actual fur. You can reduce pet dander by trying any of the following things:

- Create an "allergy-free" zone in the home, like the bedroom, where the cat is not allowed.
- Use high-efficiency HEPA air cleaners throughout your home to clean the air of allergen particles.
- Try to remove or reduce the number of dust and allergen-catching items in your home, such as carpeting, rugs, cloth curtains and blinds, etc.
- Clean your home frequently and thoroughly to remove dust and dander. Wash cloth items that collect dander.
- Bathe your cat on a weekly basis. (Yes, with patience and positive reinforcement they can get accustomed to this!) Discuss bathing with your veterinarian to best determine which shampoos, if any, to use.
- Ask your doctor to test you for allergies to determine exactly what you are allergic to, because many people are allergic to more than just cats. Reducing the amount of the other allergens in your home will help to reduce your overall allergic reaction.
- Speak with your doctor about which one of many "anti-allergy" drugs might be right for you. Often, it only takes one pill a day to significantly reduce your allergic reaction, making it possible for you to keep your cat.

I simply can't afford my cat anymore

In today's economy, this has become a common reason that people need to give up their pets. However, animals really do not need to be an "added expense" if you can learn to balance their expenses. Not all of your cat's necessities need to be purchased at the same time, and sometimes not even in the same month. Cats are really quite inexpensive. Here is a list of what cat really needs:

- Collar - \$1 at the local dollar store
- Rabies vaccination (which comes with a rabies identification tag) - \$20-\$30 depending on your veterinarian,
- Food - \$5-\$30 per month depending on the brand
- Litter - \$4-\$15 per month depending on the brand
- If you are still having trouble affording the things that your cat needs, and if this is the only reason why you have chosen to surrender your cat, consider asking for help from friends or family members.

Steps to Take if You Must Surrender Your Cat

There are a number of steps that you should actively explore before making the final decision to bring your cat to the Eau Claire County Humane Association

The first step is to ***try to find a new home for the cat on your own:***

- Talk to friends, family members, neighbors, local veterinarians, and others you trust to try and find someone willing to adopt your cat. As a last resort, advertise in the newspaper.
- Never abandon your cat in a rural area or on a farm. Just because some cats live as farm pets, does not mean that your cat will be able to survive outside. Your cat is not able to care for itself on its own; it is your responsibility to provide for the cat.
- Screen potential adopters carefully. Do not be afraid to deny a potential adopter if you just do not "feel right" about them. Trust your instincts. Your cat's future happiness depends on it.
- Always ask for an adoption fee from the adopter. Never give your cat away as "free to a good home" because this can attract the wrong kind of adopter.

When you've found a potential new home for your cat...

- Personally visit the prospective new home yourself to ensure that it is a safe and healthy environment suitable for your cat.
- Have your cat spayed/neutered before placing them with their new family to help reduce pet overpopulation.
- Require adopters to provide a valid form of ID, like a driver's license, and make a written record of their license number. Also require them to sign an adoption contract that requires them to contact you to return your cat if for some reason they can no longer keep it.

If you are not able to rehome your cat on your own, the next step is to ***contact other cat adoption or rescue organizations:***

- Contact other animal shelters and rescues in the area to see if they will accept your cat.
- Search the phone book or Internet for cat rescue homes and organizations, but screen every organization carefully to ensure that it is a legitimate rescue with sincere intentions.

As a final step, if you have no other options, ***bring your cat to the Eau Claire County Humane Association on the date of your scheduled surrender appointment...***

It is important that you understand the implications of surrendering your cat to the ECCHA. We exist as a resource to people who have explored *all* other alternatives. However, we take in 2-10 cats per day. Our space and resources are limited. As a result, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to place your cat up for adoption. There is a possibility that your cat may have to be euthanized if we determine that he or she is unadoptable. Issues that could encourage us to make that difficult decision include, but are not limited to, medical problems (such as FIV or FELV positive) or behavioral issues (for example, litter box problems or aggression). This is why we encourage you to sincerely and thoroughly try to find an alternative to surrendering your cat. Please understand that we want to help your pet find a good home, and we are very appreciative that you have taken the time and responsibility to contact us.

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