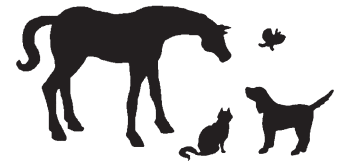


FMCA news



"Dignity for Animals"

Message From the President: The Silent Victims of the Foreclosure Crisis

"Humans aren't the only victims of the current economic crisis. Pets are being surrendered to animal shelters or, even worse, simply abandoned at an unprecedented rate because owners can no longer afford to care for them,"¹ or are being evicted from their home. This is grim news for all humane groups and even grimmer for the pets that are flooding our shelters, left in foreclosed homes, or dumped in feral colonies or in the "country." FMCA now has its first "eviction cat." Poor Gatsby! Abandoned as a kitten once in 2003 at a dump in Virginia and now abandoned as a 6-year-old neutered male short hair brown tabby because his family has been evicted! (Not to worry – Gatsby is back at CBMP's house – more about him later.)

While NBC news recently reported that 400,000 pets or more would become homeless when 800,000 homes went into foreclosure nationally in 2008 with 70% of these pets flooding our shelters, other estimates are direr. According to No Paws Left Behind, 63% of Americans have household pets and "as foreclosures grow, 2-4 million Americans will lose their homes before the crisis ends leaving over 1.26 **million** companion animals at risk."² "Abandoning pets for any reason is not only irresponsible – it is illegal," said Stephanie Shane, director of outreach for animals at HSUS,³ but enforcement is almost non-existent. In an ABC 7 News/The Pet Stop/Care and Love of Your Pet 7/24/09 email, "American Humane is quick to point out that animals left behind or simply set free will probably not survive." It can be weeks or months before a bank or mortgage company will visit an abandoned house to make an assessment or a neighbor notices that pets are trapped in a house. Even if water or food were initially left, this is way too long for the pets to survive. Even though only 50% of the pets turned into shelters get

adopted, this is a far more humane choice than abandonment. "To make matters worse, a March 2008 Petfinders.com survey revealed that 57% of shelter and rescue groups respondents have had a drop in adoptions since the downturn of the economy over the last year, making it harder than ever to find new homes for foreclosure-forsaken pets."⁴

The plight of the silent victims of foreclosure and the economy is nationwide, but especially severe in high foreclosure pockets. In the Stockton and Modesto areas of Stanislaus County in northern California, abandonment of pets is quite frankly, horrific. Traci Jennings, president of the Humane Society of Stanislaus County laments, "Pets are getting dumped all over. Farmers are finding dogs dumped on their grazing ground while house

cats are showing up in wild cat colonies where they watch from a distance while a group of feral cats devour a pile of dry food. The first people to enter an abandoned house such as property inspectors and real estate brokers have discovered dogs tied to trees in backyards, cats in garages, and turtles, rabbits, and lizards in children's bedrooms."⁵ If you are as mad as I am right now, you want to know what you can do to help this horrible injustice. Following will be an outline of the "experts" recommendations of how a potential evicted family should approach finding a safe haven for their pets, including a nationwide humane group No Paws Left Behind, Inc. founded by Cheryl Lang, president of Integrated Mortgage solutions.

Animal welfare experts agree that abandonment is never the answer. Plan ahead! Contact your local shelter or rescue groups where you now live and where you are planning to move if out of the area. They are able to provide you with a list of rental communities allowing pets. Ask your veterinarians for low cost boarding or ask

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