Pet Talk

Welcome to *Pet Talk*, an occasional column about homeless pets and related topics. Today's article addresses the following frequently asked question: "*Why do I need an appointment to see the adoptable pets at the Flathead County Animal Shelter*?"

Good question, so let's dive in. The first thing to be aware of is that many shelters across the U.S. now require appointments for visitors to see (or surrender) local pets. In part, the policy evolved in response to difficulties posed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Previously, the Flathead County Animal Shelter allowed visitors to come in virtually any time during open business hours (except for Sundays or Mondays, the latter of which are reserved for veterinarian exam days).

So here's a fairly common (but hypothetical) pre-COVID scenario: A potential adopter arrives at the shelter on a busy Saturday and wanders back to the kennel area, essentially unsupervised.

Soon an ear-splitting crescendo erupts as 25 barking dogs rise to greet the new visitor. Now the adopter becomes overwhelmed and begins to lose focus amid the ear-shattering cacophony.

But let's assume the visitor manages to spot a potentially friendly dog that might fit the bill.

(That's a pretty big assumption because, as one local volunteer points out, most dogs can't show their true lovable nature when confined to loud, nerve-wracking shelter environments!)

But, alas, before that dog can be taken out to the meet-and-greet location another potential adopter arrives and the kennel noise grows even louder than before.

So, what happened next in such scenarios? Well, the viewing process sometimes became so confusing and overwhelming that visitors often decided to leave without a new pet. Undoubtedly, many felt frustrated about the whole adoption process.

Ultimately such experiences were not only unfortunate for adopters and the homeless pets, but also reflected badly on the shelter itself.

Now let's consider the current management approach, where a system of carefully arranged appointments is in place to promote orderly and efficient adoptions.

Let's say a potential adopter is looking for a mid-size older dog. And luckily, our hypothetical adopter notices several candidates on the *Adoptable Dogs* page on the shelter website (see address below). Convenient, right?

Conversely let's say your heart's desire is to adopt a small dog. If no such dogs happen to be available, the web browsing has saved you from making an unnecessary trip to the shelter.

But let's say the *Adoptable Dogs* (or cats!) page looks promising. At that point you can select an available viewing appointment. Upon your arrival, the staff can then take the pet out of its kennel for a meet-and-greet session.

In the end, carefully controlled shelter

management benefits both adopters and their potential adoptees. In fact, some folks have been so pleased with the efficiency of the adoption process that they sometimes decide to adopt more than one pet. For example, how about a bonded pair!

So which system seems best to you, an informal loosey-goosey approach or a thoughtful, systematic process?

In summary, thanks to the modern system of using the internet along with scheduled appointments, everyone stands to win—potential adopters and adoptees, busy staff, and the shelter itself, which continues to pursue its mission of reducing the valley's large homeless pet population through adoption.

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Well, that's it for today's Pet Talk. If you too love pets, please consider adopting one (or more!) when the time is right. You can also help spread the word among family and friends in rapidly growing Flathead County.

And please remember the generous adoption incentives at the county shelter. First, a recent donation from a local animal lover has allowed the shelter to substantially reduce its adoption fees. Flathead Shelter Friends also offers a Senior Pet Voucher, which pays up to $350 toward veterinary care for 7+ year-old adopted pets!

For more information, please contact Flathead County Animal Shelter, phone number (406) 758-1310, or visit the website at https://flathead.mt.gov/department-directory/animal.

Pet Tails *is produced by* ***Flathead Shelter Friends Inc., an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Our work is supported in part by a grant from the Whitefish Community Foundation.***

Personal donations are always appreciated! For more information, see **www.flatheadshelterfriends.org**