

Editorial:

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Editor's Notebook

Pets are responsibilities, not accessories

On Monday, 10 people returned or surrendered animals to the Orange County Humane Society. They just dropped them off and said, "Sorry, I'm moving"; or "Sorry, he didn't sit when I told him to"; or "Sorry, I don't feel like taking care of my pet anymore"; or, the No. 1 excuse on Monday, "I'm sorry, I'm going on vacation and boarding fees are too high."

Person after person came in and surrendered his or her pet, not wanting to pay for boarding during a vacation, said Courtney Dorney, manager of the shelter.

Ten animals, and that was just on Monday. Since January, 512 animals have been surrendered, Dorney said.

"The biggest excuse we see is people are moving," said Shannon Mead, a volunteer at the shelter on Newland Street. "And a lot of people are moving to new homes with big yards — I just don't get it."

The most outrageous excuse she has heard: The animal "doesn't match my carpet."

That is just deplorable to me.

Adopting or buying a pet is accepting responsibility for another life. An animal is not an accessory. It is not a responsibility that can or should be shrugged off when it is no longer convenient.

And I realize its not always convenient. I know it is near impossible to find a place to live in Southern California if you have a dog. My terrier schnauzer mix and I have had a very tough time finding a place to call home since we moved out here. But I took her in nearly six years ago, and that's that. **There's no returning a life.** (emphasis by ETS. I like this phrase.)

Now, I will be the first to admit that I am a devoted, perhaps slightly over the top, dog owner — she sleeps on the bed, she's allowed on the couch, she has insurance (although that's more for my benefit) and has received more regular and frequent doctor visits in her six years than I have in my whole life.

And she is without a doubt a mama's girl. But to me, that is just living up to my

responsibility to give her the best, most comfortable life I can.

She eats dog food, and I don't buy her outfits or throw her birthday parties. I'm not suggesting that dog owners treat their pets as humans. But, in many ways, it is a responsibility similar to having a child — they are dependent and need care and love.

Abandonment is a betrayal of that responsibility.

They hear all kinds of excuses at the shelter, Mead said. Some return dogs for shedding, saying they want a dog that doesn't shed, or doesn't chew.

"I have a girlfriend who returned a dog because it went to the bathroom in her house once," Mead said.

Those are problems that are solved by training a pet, which is another portion of your responsibility.

Each time the movie "101 Dalmatians," or some version of it, is released, people go out in droves and buy and adopt the speckled pups.

A high percentage of those pets are abandoned within months when the novelty wears off and they realize those pups are work and that breed needs a lot of attention. It's a cute movie that causes cruelty each time its released.

And that is what returning a pet is, cruel and irresponsible.

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