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Open house at Animal Services provides opportunities to adopt a loveable pet



A yellow cat with a good personality asks to be petted at Saturday's adoption event at Levy County Animal Services.

Story and Photos By Terry Witt, Senior Reporter © Jan. 15, 2017 at 6:57 a.m.

BRNISON -- There's never a shortage of loveable dogs and cats waiting at Levy County Animal Services for a family to adopt them.

Saturday (Jan. 14) was no exception, except that the facility is normally closed for adoptions on Saturdays. Levy County Animal Services held an open house pet adoption event at their office near the landfill and solid waste transfer station. A steady stream of potential adopters tickled in all day to look at prospective dogs and cats.



A dog with a peppy personality looks curiously at the photographer.

The dog kennel and cat house were populated by tail-

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wagging and meowing residents willing to do whatever it took to win over a new owner. One dog dropped his head in disappointment after realizing this photographer was only there to take his picture and not take him home.

By the noon hour, the animal services team had provided new homes to two lucky animals. Since the start of January, the animal services office has found homes for 16 dogs and cats, an unusually active period for adoptions, according to Levy County Animal Services Director David Weatherford.



The meet and greet room of the cat house gives prospective pet parents a chance to interact with the cat before making a final decision.

One of the cats adopted on Saturday had been housed in the relatively new “cat house” since Sept. 29 last year. Crystal Pruitt, a secretary for animal services, said they try to find adoptive homes for as many of the dogs and cats as possible.

Some animals are euthanized if homes can’t be found. Dr. Dee Esler, the animal services veterinarian, said the animals that are euthanized are given a sedative to relax them and put them to sleep before they are injected intravenously with the chemical that euthanizes them. She said she doesn’t like euthanizing animals, but when it has to be done, it is done humanely in her sterile surgery center.

The reason the open house adoption event took place at Levy Animal Services was related to complaints about the cost of adoption events. Many of the adoption events take place at Tractor Supply Co. in Chiefland, a business with a high customer traffic count and therefore a greater stream of potential pet parents walking past the cages.

“We’ve been having complaints that we need to have it here, so we thought we’d give

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it a try,” said County Commissioner Lilly Rooks, who is assigned to oversee animal services.

She said the complaint was that the county was using too much manpower to take the adoption events to Chiefland and too much money was being spent on overtime, but Rooks said the county still had to pay overtime for the event the Levy County Landfill on Saturday. Rooks spent the day at animal services.

One positive side of using Levy County Animal Services as the site of a special adoption event is that more dogs and cats are seen by prospective pet parents. The county carries fewer dogs and cats to remote events like the one at Tractor Supply Co. or Ace Hardware in Bronson. The special adoption events also allow for the office to be opened to visitors on Saturdays.

Weatherford said the county has looked at whether opening the office on Saturday would increase adoptions.

To adopt a male dog from the shelter the fee is \$40, which covers neutering, rabies vaccination (if age appropriate), deworming, flea control and microchipping. To adopt a female dog from the shelter the fee is \$55, which covers spaying, rabies vaccination (if age appropriate), deworming, flea control and microchipping. To adopt a male cat from the shelter the fee is \$25, which covers neutering, rabies vaccination (if age appropriate), deworming, flea control and microchipping. To adopt a female cat from the shelter the fee is \$40, which covers spaying, rabies vaccination (if age appropriate), deworming, flea control and microchipping.

All transactions such as adoption, impounding, etc. are cash payment only – no checks or cards.

Other than this special event, adoptions can be done Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. The staff encourages people to get there by 3:30 p.m. to give them time to complete the required paperwork. All adoptions are done on a first come basis. A current list of adoptable dogs and cats can be found at the website by clicking [HERE](#).

Prior to Dr. Esler joining the staff as the onsite veterinarian, the cost of adoption was twice what it is now, according to Weatherford.

Weatherford said the Levy County Commission at one point talked about the possibility of establishing a mobile spay and neutering clinic but doing so would have been costly. He said the price of bringing a mobile veterinary unit from Jacksonville is \$1,300 per day including staff, medicines and travel costs.

The animal services office has been using its new cat room to keep felines in a comfortable climate controlled setting. The eight-month-old cat room was developed with money from a private donor. The facility includes a “meet and greet room,” where prospective pet parents can become acquainted with their choice of cats before making a final decision. The door of one cage was opened for a photo opportunity. The yellow-colored cat immediately walked out to introduce herself to what she thought was a prospective owner, purring and indicating she was ready for a petting.

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Prospective pet owners walk along the concrete path between dog cages to find a potential match that suits them.

Critics of Levy County Animal Services are relentless in their criticism of the department. During the open house pet adoption Saturday, Ed Roehl of Critter Crusaders took a tour of the dog kennel. He said he had been asked to make the visit to look at conditions in the kennel. The kennels had been sprayed clean with water, and smelled clean, but Roehl said he wasn't happy with what he saw. "I've seen worse," he said.

Weatherford noted that this is the first time in ages that one of the dog kennels is vacant. He said the empty dog kennel is the result of successful adoptions.