

Common Myths About Shelter Dogs

They're all mutts (aka mixed breed)

Actually, shelters commonly report that about a quarter of their dogs are purebred. There are also many breed-specific rescue groups. If you have your heart set on a specific breed of dog, chances are there is a rescue group for that breed. A good place to find one is www.petfinder.com, where you can search for adoptable pets by breed. Or you can look for the national breed club website where they should have information about rescue dogs that are available for adoption.

If they ended up in a shelter, they must have behaviour problems

Dogs end up in shelters for many reasons: their owner died or had to move overseas, they were lost or born homeless, they were seized from an owner who wasn't taking good care of them...the reasons are endless. Most have nothing to do with the personality or behaviour of the dog itself. Some may have minor behavioural issues that can be addressed. All responsible humane societies, SPCAs and rescue groups give their dogs a temperament test, and those with serious behaviour problems, such as aggression, are not put up for adoption.

They are all old and untrainable

Most dogs in shelters are less than 2 years old, and some are even puppies. Dogs are incredibly adaptable creatures – with guidance, patience, love and good leadership, most shelter dogs become well-adjusted and gentle companions.

Shelter animals are inferior to purebreds

Purebred dogs are not smarter, healthier or more even-tempered than canines of mixed breeding. In fact, the reverse is often true.

Animals from abusive homes don't make good pets because they've been mistreated for so long

With proper care, attention and leadership, most animals from abusive homes are able to make a full emotional recovery. They are often so grateful to be rescued from the abuse and anxiety that they become extremely devoted and loyal.

All shelter animals are sickly or unhealthy

Most shelter animals are healthy and have been vaccinated and checked by a veterinarian before being adopted out. Some may have medical problems, but the shelter will tell you about them before you make the decision to adopt.

Shelters only let you adopt if you're the "perfect" owner

The dogs in shelters have already been abandoned at least once. Shelters want to prevent that from happening again. So they make sure that you're informed, prepared and committed – and that it's a good match for both of you. They ask many questions of potential adopters to ensure that you can make a long-term commitment to take care of the animal's physical, emotional and behavioural needs.

Shelters are depressing

Most shelters are stretched to the limit in terms of finances and space. It can be hard to see the animals in cages, but think of the shelter as a place of hope and second chances. Good-hearted people are working there, and they save animal lives every single day.