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Dr. Ruth MacPete debunks common myths about shelter dogs (and cats). For more from Dr. MacPete, find her on Facebook or at www.drruthpetvet.com!

October is "Adopt-A-Shelter-Dog" month! Besides being a great way to get your next dog (or cat), adopting from the shelter gives a deserving animal a loving home. Unfortunately, many people don't adopt from the shelter because of common misconceptions. In order to shed light on this problem and help dispel these fallacies, I have listed the most common myths about shelter animals.

1. Don't shelters only have mutts?

Many people believe that the only animals found at the shelter are mixed breeds. While mixed breed dogs and cats make-up a sizable portion of the shelter population, many are unaware that shelters have dogs and cats of all types. If you are looking for a purebred, you can find Chihuahuas, Beagles, Labradors, and my favorite, Boxers, to name a few. Of course, you can also find adorable mixes that span the colorful canine rainbow. The same is true for cats. You can find black, white, gray, tabby, calico mixed breeds, and even purebreds like Siamese, Persian, and others. For example, in the past year, my local shelter had two Devon Rex cats (in case you aren't familiar with the breed, the Devon Rex is a rare English breed of curly-haired cats)! No matter what you are looking for, whether it is a purebred or an adorable mixed-breed, you can find the perfect companion at a shelter if you just look!

2. Aren't there only adult animals at the shelter?

Another common belief is that shelters only have adult animals. The truth is that you can find dogs and cats of all ages, from puppies and kittens all the way to mature animals. While puppies and kittens are cute and playful, they are definitely not for everyone. People forget that puppies require a lot of training and socialization in order to become well-mannered adults. Adult and mature dogs, on the other hand, sometimes come already housebroken and trained. The take home point is that shelters have animals of all ages so it should be easy to find the right animal for your family.

3. Don't shelter animals have something wrong with them?

One of the most common misconceptions is that shelter animals have something wrong with them. People erroneously believe that shelter animals were relinquished because of behavior or medical problems. As a result, they'd rather get their pet from a pet store or breeder to avoid getting a "problem" animal. The fact is animals end up in shelters for a number of reasons. Sadly, many are there through no fault of their own. Countless numbers of dogs and cats end up in shelters because they were a mismatch with their adopting families or their families did not anticipate the level of responsibility needed to care for them. Others are given up because their owners have passed away or moved away. Some were given up because their owners were no longer able to physically or financially care for them. Still others end up in the shelter because they got lost and were found on the streets. Whatever the reason, the majority of animals at shelters do not have health, behavior, or temperament problems.

My own dog Oski is the perfect example of the kind of amazing dog you can get find at the shelter. He was about 6 months old when he ended up at the shelter. He was found running loose and had a small cut on his leg. No one came to claim him and even though two people put a "hold" on him, no one showed up to adopt him. It must have been fate for me to end up with him! Not only is he one of the cutest Boxers I have ever seen, but he is also one of the sweetest dogs. He is great with my kids and fabulous with my cats and various foster animals. Besides an "accident" he had in the house on his first night and a fetish for eating crayons, he is incredibly well behaved.

So the next time you're ready to adopt an animal into your family, be sure to check out your local animal shelter. You'll be surprised to find all the wonderful animals just waiting for someone to love them. You

might even find your own “Oski.”

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian – they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.