

Shelter gives strays a chance

By Susan Poole
Battalion Reporter

The kennel of the Brazos Animal Shelter Inc. is a maze of chain link cages reaching to the ceiling but no wider and longer than a bathtub.

In one of them a black and tan hound with large, soulful eyes rests his chin on his paws. A "ready to adopt" sign hangs on the gate of another cage where a small chihuahua-like dog anxiously wiggles and wags its tail.

Other dogs snuggly lie in their cages, sleepily raising an eyelid

when someone passes.

Most of these stray and abandoned dogs will be claimed by their masters or adopted by new masters, but some of them will end up being put to sleep.

The stray and wild animal population is a problem that every city faces.

Unfortunately, most pet dogs that are lost or abandoned by their owners end up being hit by cars or become too starved or diseased to survive, Kathryn L. Ricker, head of the shelter, said.

In some cities the number of

dogs killed by cars match the number of live stray dogs found, she said.

"Someone is paid full-time to clean dead animals off the streets of Bryan and College Station," Ricker said.

Malnutrition is another problem these lost dogs suffer, which is a factor leading to disease. Ricker said she has seen dogs with severe mange, ulcers all over their bodies and other health problems.

"Dogs that have been lost since they were puppies have been found and their necks have grown completely around their collars," she said. "There are ulcers all around the area and it is extremely painful. Unless someone wants to spend the time and money to bring the dog back to normal health the only humane thing we can do is put it to sleep."

But some dogs do survive and adapt to outdoor life without people. They become like wild animals and will even raise litters which are wilder.

"A pack of wild dogs used to roam the Southwest Parkway and Krenk Tap Road area in College Station," Ricker said. "They even would raise litters behind the Post Oak Mall area. These puppies were definitely wild and had never been touched by human hands."

Wild dogs survive mainly by scavenging garbage dumpsters and cans and eating cat and dog food left outside of homes. Some of them are good enough to catch rabbits, frogs, rats and other small animals, Ricker said. Dogs will also eat berries and other edible plants, she said.

Ricker warns against people feeding abandoned or wild animals.

"People feel sorry for them and feed them," she said. "But what they are really doing is increasing the rabies and other disease potential in their area."

If people want to feed a stray animal, Ricker said they should take responsibility for the animal by taking it to get shots for rabies and distemper, having it wormed and neutered. It is not fair to the animal to feed it but not take care of it, she said.

Wild animals should not be handled, Ricker said. The best thing a person could do is call Animal Control to catch the animal.

Most wild dogs and other animals are caught by humane traps, she said. A meaty bone or other type of bait is placed in the trap. When an animal enters the cage to get the bait a trap door closes behind them, Ricker said.

When a wild dog is caught, it is taken to the shelter where, if it can be tamed, it could be adopted. Otherwise it is put to sleep, she said.

Wild cats are a bigger problem, she added.

"There is no hope for a wild cat," Ricker said. "It can't be socialized. It is as wild as a tiger. The only thing we can do is put them to sleep."

When stray animals are caught that are not wild, the shelter holds them for three days to see if they are claimed, she said. If an animal is not claimed it is checked for health problems and, if healthy, is put up for adoption, Ricker said.

"We get about 800 animals a month, more in the summer, and 10-40 percent of them are claimed by their owners," she said. "Of the ones left, 10-20 percent are adopted. We think that is a pretty good rate."

In order to adopt a dog from the shelter, the potential owner must pass an interview and sign a contract. The contract says the person has to have the animal neutered and take it to get a rabies shot, Ricker said.

"We insist that the animals be neutered so there won't be any stray litters," she said. "We want to put ourselves out of business."



Eric Evan Lee, Jr.

This Great Dane is lucky to have an owner who cares for him. Many stray pets at the Brazos Animal Shelter aren't so fortunate.

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Colleges seek to aid jobless with free courses, counsel

NEW YORK — Tuition-free retraining courses are among benefits for the jobless as colleges, labor unions and others team up.

The colleges also serve up career-counseling, resume-writing workshops, job banks and other services, a survey by the Action Committee for Higher Education showed.

The Action Committee, a coalition of 26 higher education groups that serves as a clearinghouse on U.S. student aid, cited dozens of help programs for the down-and-out.

Under one, some 2,700 workers from a Ford Motor Co. plant in Washtenaw County, Mich., are eligible for free career change counseling offered by the University of Michigan's Employment Transition Team.

Up to \$4,000 in retraining costs is provided by the UAW-Ford Motor Co. Employee Development and Training Program.

"Our program is an alternative to conventional government retraining for unemployed persons," said Jeanne P. Gordus, University of Michigan researcher who heads the employment transition team.

"It doesn't tell people to take a course in robotics or to move to Boston. It gives them the information and skills to make such economic decisions, and it provides a support network for persons facing similar difficult choices."

In Missouri, Project Refocus, a community-wide program to retrain the jobless, was launched by the University of Missouri-Kansas City after Armco Steel Co. fired 1,000 workers.

Participants are put in contact with specific job-retraining programs after they attend a family assistance seminar and go through job counseling.

Near Baltimore, Dundalk Community College has linked up with the American Legion to create scholarships for veterans. The spring 1983 program provided tuition and fees for up to six college credits per jobless student.

In Cincinnati, the College of Mount St. Joseph on the Ohio last semester offered single free courses, on an as available basis, to anyone in the region who had been out of work for at least a year.

Nearly 500 took free courses. Business related subjects such as data processing, computers and accounting were most frequently requested. The school subsequently gave 55 scholarships for

fulltime schooling this year. Elmira College in N.Y., set up 10 scholarships last summer for people who have been employed within the 10 months due to a lack of education.

The scholarships, for four years, assure continued financial need and good standing.

For the 40-plus executive, Pace University Counseling Center in New York City runs a support group for middle-aged executives who have lost their jobs. The group meets in the footsteps of Helen Finley, a former executive at the Bryan-Coleman Co. who said the program was a "charter" for her.

The program was during the Great Depression. To get into it, one must have a net worth of \$25,000 or more a year.

In California, the director of High Tech Centers and Services in the Angeles Community District, said:

"Displaced workers be convinced that their jobs have ended so they concentrate on looking for new ones."

"Often workers wait to be called back to their job. They find it difficult to accept the fact that their may never come."

"Once that hurdle come, their other needs addressed — job searching, income and assistance, as well as

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