



The Real Cost of a “Free” Kitten

By Kerry Ward



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Free kittens! With the arrival of summer these advertisements are everywhere from kijiji to pembinaonline to signs at the side of the highway. It’s tempting – they are tiny and cute and adorable – and free! But what is the real cost of this free kitten you’re thinking of bringing home?

First let’s consider the financial costs. The initial bundle of fluff is free but caring for that kitten certainly is not. If you plan to be a responsible pet owner you will need to get your kitten checked out by a vet to make sure he or she is healthy, get him or her dewormed, have the kitten vaccinated to prevent it from getting sick and the kitten should be spayed or neutered by the time it is six months old. These are the current prices at the local vet clinic:

8 weeks old – wellness check-up, 1st vaccine, deworming, testing for FeLV/FIV = \$100

12 weeks old – booster shot, deworming = \$50

16 weeks old – 2nd booster, rabies vaccine, deworming = \$60

6 months old – spay surgery (female) = \$150 or neuter surgery (male) = \$90

By now your “free” kitten has already cost you about triple what it would have cost you to adopt one from a local rescue group or shelter. PVHS charges \$115 for a kitten or \$175 for two, including the spay/neuter surgery, deworming, vet check and all the vaccines appropriate for the kitten’s age. Other rescue group’s prices are similar. The charge is necessary to cover part of the kitten’s vet costs. So that’s the financial cost of your free kitten.

PVHS Summer Raffle

Tickets \$5 or 3 for \$10

Draw Date Oct. 5th

1st Prize - 50" Samsung LED Smart TV

2nd Prize - Kitchenaid countertop oven and slow cooker

3rd Prize - New Balance Aura Wireless Headphones

Secondly, consider the cost to the mother cat of uncontrolled breeding. Cats can have their first litter as young as 7 months of age, equivalent in human terms to a young teenage mom. Early pregnancy can take a toll on the health of the young mom cat and their growth may be permanently stunted by raising a litter before they are physically mature. Cats can have up to 3 litters a year and the state of being constantly pregnant or nursing puts a lot of strain on the mother cat's body and can impact her long term health, particularly if the mother cat is not well fed and cared for herself during her pregnancies. By providing a home for a "free kitten" you encourage irresponsible owners to continue to allow their cat to breed indiscriminately instead of getting their cat fixed. The mother cat of your free kitten is probably living a hard life.

The third cost of that free kitten is what I'm going to call the social cost, which is largely invisible unless you go looking for it. In 2014, the latest year for which statistics are available, there were approximately 85,000 cats in shelters in Canada according to the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies. 35% of these were kittens. Sadly 27% of these cats and kittens were euthanized because there simply weren't enough homes for all of them. That's approximately 23,000 more cats and kittens than available homes. Closer to home the Winnipeg Humane Society, our provinces largest shelter, took in 6044 cats and kittens in 2015. Of those 3238 were adopted into new homes while just over 2000 were euthanized.

There are many legitimate reasons why cats end up in shelters – the owner passes away or ends up in a hospital or nursing home, people lose their jobs or homes and can no longer provide for their pet, serious allergies develop in the household... Sadly there will always be cats in need of rehoming. Every time you adopt a free kitten that is one less potential home available for a shelter cat who is waiting for one, and their lives literally depend on it. So next time you want to adopt a cat consider an adult cat from a shelter instead of that cute free kitten. If you have your heart set on a kitten, then adopt one of those from a shelter. Most shelters have policies that require the mother cat to be either surrendered with the litter or spayed if the owner wants to keep her. The kittens surrendered to the shelter will also be spayed or neutered, breaking the cycle of continuous irresponsible breeding. So adopt

save
save

***Time Spent with Cats is
Never Wasted
Sigmund Freud***

shelter.
money and
lives.

***Women and cats will do
as they please, and men
and dogs should relax
and get used to the
idea.
Robert A. Heinlein***

from a
You'll
you'll

Volunteer Profile - Tanya Rempel

What do you do at PVHS?

I am a coverage chore shift leader, fundraising committee member and I exercise dogs several times a week. As a fundraising committee member I volunteer at events and assist in planning and organizing various fundraising events throughout the year. My main job is exercising dogs several times a week in the backyard. I work on basic obedience training, introducing them to other dogs and sometimes just playing.

What made you decide to get involved with PVHS? How long have you been a volunteer?

I became involved with PVHS when I was in high school. I was actually quite scared of dogs when I was younger, but my brother got a dog for his birthday and I started to get over my fear of them. After we lost him, I missed interacting with animals and decided to volunteer. I've been involved with the shelter since 2010 when the new building opened. My first 2 years were spent running large groups of dogs with co-founder Al Titchosky and that's where I learned a lot about dog behaviour.

What is your favorite part of your job? What is the most rewarding part?

My favorite part is seeing some of the more neglected and abused animals come out of their shell once they see we are there to help them. The most rewarding part is seeing adopted animals with their new families. I really enjoy seeing animals with their families at fundraising events and hearing about how well they are doing.

Do you have a current favorite PVHS dog? Cat? Why?

Yermo of course! I love Yermo because he came in about a year ago quite scared, angry and honestly a little annoying. He jumped a lot and was a real pain. But now he's a big sweetheart and has learned a few cool tricks! My favorite cat is probably Vadar. He is so friendly and people-oriented. He loves to hang out with you and has learned all kinds of cool tricks – jumping through a hoop and weaving through the pylons of the dog agility course.

You also maintain one of our social media sites. What does that involve?

I assist in running the PVHS Instagram account with Melissa Bond. That usually entails taking and posting dog photos and videos, as well as some cat photos. Since I work with the dogs often and get to see some of their goofiness, Melissa and I thought it would be great to post that stuff on a social media platform that many people use.

Tell us a bit about yourself. Do you have pets of your own?

I don't currently have pets of my own but I foster animals for PVHS and other rescue groups. I also occasionally dog/cat sit for friends. When I'm not busy surrounding myself with animals I like to be outside or spend time with friends.



Tanya with former shelter dog Kitty with Kitty's obedience training certificate

Raise the Woof Comedy Night

Friday Sept. 23rd

Doors open @ 7 PM

Show @ 8 PM

Quality Inn Winkler

*Tickets are \$35 and
include snacks, dessert,
and a professional
comedy show.*

*There will also be
raffles and a 50/50
draw.*

*Scratch a dog and you'll
find a permanent job.*

Franklin P. Jones

What advice would you give to anyone thinking of signing up to volunteer? What can they expect to get out of the experience?

If you like animals you will love volunteering at PVHS. Not only can you spend time with animals, but you also get to meet people who love animals as much as you. You can expect to get a little dirty and a little bit covered in hair.

Featured Pets



Rusty is a 1 year old neutered male. He is one of a litter of barn kittens that we received, so he didn't get a lot of socialization as a young kitten. As a result he is very shy at first with new people, but he's a very friendly and affectionate cat. Once he warms up to you he will rub up against you for petting and thrust his head at you to be

scratched. Rusty does great with other cats and would do best in a home with another friendly cat. His mom is Cookie and his brother is Boo Boo and he'd love to go home with one of them. He'd do best in a quieter home. He'd also be fine as a barn cat.



MollyJo is a 2 year old mixed breed spayed female. She loves people and loves to play with toys out in the exercise yard. She will fetch and she especially loves the squeaky toys. She also likes to play in the wading pool. Molly Jo has played nicely with several of the other shelter dogs but she does not like all of them so it is important for her to meet any dog she is expected to live with first. She has a very high prey drive and should not go to a home with pet cats, rabbits, tiny dogs or caged pets that she might encounter. She is a very strong dog and does not yet walk well on a leash. She knows basic obedience commands.



Bradley is a 3 year old neutered male. He's an active cat who loves to play with his toys and run around and play chase with the other cats in his condo. He gets along very well with the other cats and will even share a food bowl with them. Bradley is friendly and affectionate, loves to be petted and is always happy to receive some attention. This nice boy deserves a new home soon.



Bruce is a 1 ½ year old neutered male. He's super friendly and just plain good company. He's an active cat who likes to play and is fairly independent but he loves to be petted and hang out with you. Bruce has done great with all the female cats he's been housed with and all the young males but he sees other fully grown male cats as a threat. He loves to play with kittens. He'd do best in a home where he's the only adult male cat (raising a younger male kitten with him would be fine).

See all our available animals at pvhsociety.ca.

Ask the Vet

By Dr. Gina Bowen

10 Myths Regarding Spaying and Neutering

Myth # 1 I want my dog to be masculine. Neutering him will make him girly and he won't be a good guard dog.

It's true that an intact male dog will generally have a bigger head and more muscle mass. Intact male dogs are more likely to be dog aggressive but having them neutered does not influence their ability to be a good guard dog. I don't feel that guard dogs need to be aggressive. Any dog on the property is a strong deterrent.

Myth #2 I could never do that to my pet; they would miss their "parts".

I've heard this concern a lot. In the thousands of dogs and cats that I've sterilized, not one owner has ever come back saying that their pet misses his or her "parts" . It just doesn't happen.

Myth #3 My cat should have a litter before I get her spayed.

This is a real myth that some people still believe. Dogs and cats do not calm down or have a better personality after having a litter. A dog or cat that is spayed is the same as your intact pet who is not in heat. It's true that when in heat, pregnant or lactating, animals are hormonal and can exhibit different behaviours. However, most often these behaviours are not desirable to the owners. They include peeing outside the litter box, meowing constantly, bleeding in the house and being more aggressive to other animals or people.

Myth # 4 I want my kids to witness the miracle of birth.

I think there are more important lessons you can teach your children concerning pets than the trauma of birth. Separating kids from the puppies/kittens at 8 weeks when they go to their new homes can also be very traumatic for children. Teaching responsible ownership including vaccinations, behaviour training , deworming and sterilization to reduce the pet overpopulation problem are important lessons too.

Myth # 5 It's okay for my cat to have a litter as long as I can find homes for all the kittens.

Take a few minutes and check Pembina Valley online and your local humane society website. There are so many homeless cats looking for homes. Even if you can find a home for all of the kittens (there could be 6 or more), are they going to spay/neuter those cats or continue adding to the breeding pool? People looking for cats/kittens can get a vaccinated and fixed cat from a humane society for a very affordable price; much cheaper than paying full price because veterinary clinics will often give discounts to humane societies. There is an overabundance of felines in our area. I don't know if anyone can argue that we need more.

Up-Coming Events

PVHS Garage Sale / Open House
Fri Sept. 9 + Sat Sept. 10

Raise the Woof Comedy Night –
Fri Sept. 23

Summer Raffle Draw Date –
Oct. 5

Curl for the Critters Bonspiel –
Nov 26

Myth # 6 I got my female spayed so there is no need to neuter the male.

Spaying a female certainly helps. Having an intact male dog or cat who is wandering looking for females in heat just becomes someone else's problem. They pee on everything in sight, fight with each other and still produce unwanted offspring; you just don't have to deal with them. The old saying still holds that "it takes two to tango". Why not be a good neighbour and neuter your male so he's not getting every female on the block pregnant. Your intact male will also keep trying to mate with your spayed female, even though she's not interested, so you'll have a lot of cat/dog fights to deal with.

Myth # 7 It's too expensive.

There is a cost involved. At our clinic a cat neuter is about \$90, cat spay about \$150, dog neuter \$125 and dog spay \$175. You only have to pay for the procedure once in a pet's life and your pet can live for an average of 12 years. That's not a lot of money invested over a 12 year lifespan. The cost of a c-section in a dog if there are problems during labour is about \$600. The cost of giving kittens or puppies their first vaccinations and deworming is \$35 per animal. Those prices add up quickly for a whole litter to more than the cost of sterilization.

Myth # 8 Unnecessary surgery is dangerous for my pet.

There are some risks with anesthesia and surgery. That's why all pets undergoing anesthesia get a pre anesthetic physical exam, proper sedation, safe anesthetic drugs, proper pain control, strict sterile technique, a veterinary health technician monitoring them at all times while under anesthetic and a well trained veterinarian performing the procedure. We do roughly 500 spay/neuter procedures in our clinic every year and the complication rate is extremely low. We reduce the risks as much as possible. There are also risks for a pet who is pregnant, in labour or lactating. Bleeding, infection, low calcium and death are just a few.

Myth # 9 My pet will be healthier intact.

There's a healthy debate going on in the veterinary professional world regarding disease risk in sterilized versus intact animals. Large breed male dogs may be at lower risk of joint disease if they are neutered after they are fully grown. Intact female dogs are less likely to develop urinary incontinence. Sterilized animals are at lower risk for reproductive organ cancers and infections. We see mammary cancer and uterine infections in roughly 25% of older intact female dogs. If keeping your pet intact means breeding them, the risks of health problems in the females goes up. If you are unable to find good forever homes for the animals that are born their health risk certainly goes up if they don't have a loving home.

Myth # 10 They are just barn cats; they don't live long anyway so I need more kittens.

Outdoor cats who are left to fend for themselves face a lot of hardships. The extreme Manitoba temperatures, especially the winter, will kill a lot of cats if they are not provided with appropriate shelter. Parasites, respiratory viruses, starvation, and many other contagious immunocompromising viruses can significantly shorten an outdoor cat's life. Vehicles and wildlife are other risks. The more cats on the property, the more risk of disease and death at a young age. There is also more competition for resources which means that some cats are out of luck in terms of food and shelter. Try having a small population of sterilized, vaccinated outdoor cats with proper shelter and food. They'll live for years and years if they don't have to fight off disease and compete for resources.

Shelter News

In a shelter environment, there are always changes underfoot. Animals come, are loved, and off they go to a new home. New animals come and we start again.

At P.V.H.S., we are in the midst of some even bigger changes! Our Assistant Manager Mary Romanova recently left us as she and her husband have moved out of province. We wish them all the best on their new journey!

And in August, our Manager Anita Hatcher stepped down from her position with us as well. Anita had been with us for three years, and had worked tirelessly for the organization and our resident animals. We have truly appreciated her ideas, her professionalism, and her ability to relate to everyone who came through our doors. She helped us move forward in our mission, and she will be truly missed.

This means we have some new faces at P.V.H.S., and we are pleased to be welcoming Rachel Dell as our new Manager, and Heather Wolfe as our new Assistant Manager. Both ladies have begun their training and we are excited to have them join our team. We look forward to working together with them and having them lead our shelter team. Welcome aboard ladies!

We invite everyone to come and meet our new managers at our first Yard Sale/Open House on September 9 and 10. Come by, say hello and have a bite to eat while looking for a deal! Stay tuned to pvhsociety.ca and our Facebook page for more details!

PVHS Yard Sale and Open House

Fri. Sept. 9th 4-8

Sat. Sept. 10th 10-2

Come on down for a visit. You can tour the shelter, meet our adoptable animals, pick up some new used treasures at our first ever yard sale and satisfy your sweet tooth at our bake sale table.

Shelter Wish List

- *Clumping cat litter*
 - *Putty spatulas/paint scrapers*
 - *Cat treats*
 - *Dog treats*
 - *Rawhides*
 - *Dish soap*
 - *Laundry detergent*
 - *Bleach*
 - *Bounce drier sheets*
-

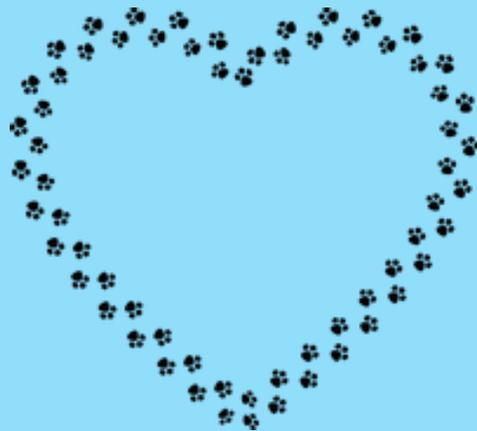


We would like to thank our sponsor Nutrisource for donating all the dry food for the dogs and cats in our care.

We would also like to thank Dr. Gina Bowen for providing excellent ongoing veterinary care for our animals.

Shelter Hours

Tues/Sat	12-5
Wed/Thurs/Fri	6-9
Sun/Mon/holidays	closed



Contact Us At

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(204) 822-3904 (fax)
pvhs@live.ca (e-mail)

*No matter how much
cats fight, there always
seem to be plenty of
kittens.*

Abraham Lincoln

If you have adopted a pet from us we'd love to share your Happy Tails adoption stories and photos in future issues. You can send them to us at pvhs@live.ca.