

# With Pet Shelters Reaching Capacity, Purina And Petfinder Urging Families To Open Their Hearts And Homes To A New Furry Friend

Shelter Closures, Natural Disasters and an Influx of Strays Drives Surge of Pets in Need of Forever Homes

ST. LOUIS, Sept. 20, 2021 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- With many shelters and rescues nationwide reaching capacity, there has never been a better time to consider adopting a new pet. According to Petfinder, a searchable pet adoption resource and network of more than 11,000 shelters and rescue organizations, the number of adoptable pets is nearing record levels with 40% more pets available for adoption compared to last year – up from 130,000 in summer 2020 to more than 240,000 pets currently available on the site. [Purina](#) and [Petfinder](#) are working to raise awareness about the factors driving shelter overcrowding and making an urgent plea to anyone considering a pet to adopt a shelter pet in need now.

## **According to Petfinder, several factors have resulted in this influx of adoptable pets, including:**

- **Pandemic Pause in Spay/Neuter Efforts** - During the height of the pandemic, efforts to spay and neuter pets decreased sharply or came to a temporary halt due to national shelter-in-place mandates and social distancing. As a result, many shelters across the country are now experiencing a wave of overcrowding due to the inundation of stray puppies and kittens.  
  
Some of the largest pet shelters in the US, including San Diego Humane Society and Michigan Humane have seen similar increases in pet intake. But contrary to some recent headlines, this increase is not due to higher numbers of relinquishment of pets adopted during the past year. The number of owner surrenders at shelters has remained flat throughout the past few years, and the recent influx can be largely attributed to the heightened animal reproduction rates during 2020 while spay and neuter efforts were suspended.
- **Disaster Displacement** - Natural disasters like Hurricane Ida, which made landfall in Louisiana last month and caused devastating floods throughout the East Coast, have also contributed to the rise in number of displaced animals. Due to massive overcrowding at shelters within the usual transportation routes for displaced pets from New Orleans, these animals are now being relocated to states that may be already facing shelter overcrowding across the country such as Atlanta, South Carolina, Missouri, California and more.
- **Under-resourced Shelters** - Additionally, many pet shelters were forced to temporarily or permanently close due to lack of funding, resources, and personnel needed to sustain during the pandemic. Petfinder noted a decrease of more than 800 active shelters on the site compared to summer of 2020. Pets from these shelters were likely transported to other locations, resulting in even more unanticipated crowding in the receiving shelters that has yet to stabilize.

"Thousands of pet shelters were and continue to be impacted by the pandemic, which has created even greater numbers of adoptable pets across the country and the need for ongoing assistance," said Jessica Arnold, Manager of Petfinder Shelter Partner Engagement at Purina. "At Purina, we know that pets and people are better together, and Petfinder is a key connector to help match amazing homeless pets with their forever families. We urge anyone looking to welcome a pet into their home, to consider adopting from one of the thousands of shelter

partners available through the expansive Petfinder network."

## **Emotional Stress on Pets and People**

The urgency in finding permanent homes for pets in overcrowded shelters is exacerbated due to the emotional toll placed on both pets and people. Pets at overcrowded shelters are experiencing longer stays due to the imbalance of adoptable pets and those willing to adopt. The high number of pets coming into shelters no longer matches the demand for adoption, which has dropped back down to pre-pandemic levels. A shelter environment, while always a safe haven for pets, can sometimes be stressful for animals waiting for adoption.

The sooner a pet is adopted, the less change (and related stress) the pet will experience," said Arnold. "No matter how long a pet has been waiting for his or her forever home in a shelter, the love of a family can be transformational."

Overcrowded shelters also report heightened incidences of staff burnout and turnover (almost 100%) due to longer hours, the natural emotional toll of the job and new employees with limited experience handling so many pets at once – especially pets who may have experienced trauma.

And many shelters fear the influx will continue. As the pandemic eviction moratorium lifts, many shelters and staff anticipate an even higher increase in adoptable pets, potentially putting staff and shelter resources under greater strain.

"Every animal deserves a safe and happy home, and right now we especially need help from the community to free up space in our shelters so we can save more lives," said Dr. Gary Weitzman, president and CEO, San Diego Humane Society. "Adopting a pet from a shelter can be a wonderful experience for your family, and one that helps to save the life of an animal in need."

For those not able to adopt immediately, fostering a pet or volunteering at a local shelter or rescue organization are also great ways to support the pets and people caring for them. A direct donation to a local shelter or to the [Petfinder Foundation](#) can also provide support, resources, supplies, food, training and transport services to shelters at this critical time.

## **Innovating Tools to Aid Adoption**

As the leading authority on pet nutrition, welfare and adoption, Purina and Petfinder encourage anyone interested in adopting to visit [Petfinder.com](#) or use the Petfinder app to connect with the largest network of shelters with adoptable pets.

As the leading online search tool to match adoptable pets with their forever homes, Petfinder continues to use innovative technology to aid shelters and those looking to adopt a new family member. Recent site updates enable better, faster matches between adopters and shelters, and offer several upgraded features for shelters. Petfinder's updated interactive quiz helps to better match potential pet owners with the perfect pet based on factors like lifestyle, house size, breed, size, age, health considerations and location – all in as little as 60 seconds. Now

adopters also have the chance to collaborate with a new tool that allows family and friends to weigh in on potential matches.

Over the past 25 years, Petfinder has been able to facilitate 35 million adoptions, with 1.8 million last year alone, and hopes to increase their numbers to find pets in need a permanent home.

### **About Purina**

Nestlé Purina PetCare creates richer lives for pets and the people who love them. Founded in 1894, Purina has helped dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives by offering scientifically based nutritional innovations. Purina manufactures some of the world's most trusted and popular pet care products, including Purina ONE, Pro Plan, Fancy Feast and Tidy Cats. Our more than 8,700 U.S. associates take pride in our trusted pet food, treat and litter brands that feed 51 million dogs and 65 million cats every year. More than 500 Purina scientists, veterinarians, and pet care experts ensure our commitment to unsurpassed quality and nutrition.

Purina promotes responsible pet care through our scientific research, our products and our support for pet-related organizations. Over the past five years, Purina has contributed more than \$150 million towards organizations that bring, and keep, people and pets together, as well as those that help our communities and environment thrive.

Purina is part of Nestlé, a global leader in Nutrition, Health and Wellness. For more information, visit [purina.com](https://www.purina.com) or [subscribe here](#) to get the latest Purina news.

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