Are Animal Collectors Kind-Hearted, Addicts or Cruel Control Freaks? by Samantha Mullen

What is an animal collector?

A person who amasses more animals than he/she can properly care for. They fail to recognize or refuse to acknowledge when the animals in their custody become victims of gross neglect.

What characteristics do animal collectors generally share?

- a need to have many animals
- a stubborn refusal to part with any of their animals, be it through adoption of relatively healthy ones or euthanasia of hopelessly sick ones.
- a tendency to deny reality - they insist that ill animals are healthy, that those confined for long periods of time in cages are comfortable; that overcrowding does not subject animals to severe stress and related diseases.
- intelligence and communication skills - combined with a shrewd ability to attract sympathy for themselves, no matter how abused their animals may be.
- recidivism - unless expert psychiatric help is obtained, collectors almost invariably return to old ways, even if convicted of cruelty to animals.

What motivates someone to accumulate and "warehouse" large numbers of animals?

- a perception that reverence for life is synonymous with preservation of life, regardless of its quality. Some people find the thought of death so abhorrent that they deem an inhumane life far preferable to a humane death. Sometimes, they go to great lengths to "rescue" animals from traditional shelters, sometimes boasting of having thus removed them from "death row."
- a "hero/martyr complex" - collectors often receive favorable publicity and become enamored of their own public image.
- a need to control - many collectors create situations which assure them absolute power over their animals — they keep their victims crowded together behind locked doors and gates, deny them human companionship, veterinary care, exercise, clean bedding, fresh air, and adequate food and water.

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How do collectors behave like addicts?

According to Karen Kemper, D.V.M., animal collectors share a number of characteristics with substance abusers:

- neglect and a lack of awareness of living conditions
- obsessively repetitious conduct
- self-deception -- alibis for or denial of problem behavior
- withdrawal from social interactions and avoidance of other people except for enablers, people who also deal in or somehow encourage the addiction. Most enablers of animal addicts supply them with financial support or additional animals.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT COLLECTOR TRAGEDIES?

- Don’t deceive yourself into believing that homeless animals are better off warehoused than euthanized. Paradoxically, the animals "saved" by collectors are usually condemned to hellish living conditions and lingering, painful deaths.
- Promote legislation which provides for licensing, inspection, and strict regulation of private and public animal shelters.
- Don’t condemn animal shelters for euthanizing animals for whom responsible homes can’t be found. They’re forced to take this action to prevent the suffering of animals who fall prey to collectors or those who will suffer and die on the streets.
- Most importantly, encourage everyone to spay and neuter all their animals. Failure to do so is the root cause of most animal tragedies relating to overpopulation and the lack of good homes.

TTNN member Samantha Mullen is the public affairs administrator of the New York State Humane Association. NYSHA helps to coordinate the efforts of humane organizations and police agencies involved in the rescue of animals from animal collectors. Contact NYSHA, P.O. Box 284, New Paltz, NY 12561.

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- From Our Files...
A conscientious vegetarian needn't boycott Thanksgiving because most traditional Thanksgiving food is vegetarian anyway and can be prepared without animal fat! You don't need to offer "vegetarian turkey substitutes" if you supply an abundance and variety of traditional dishes and condiments such as spiced peaches, cranberry sauce, wild rice, sweet potatoes and desserts such as apple and pumpkin pie. Also you can serve several types of stuffings (which can be prepared without a turkey) with a vegetarian gravy containing delicious mushroom pieces (shiitake are my favorite — the dried ones are handy and can be powdered in a blender to add with the pieces to the gravy).

The smell and taste of Thanksgiving is created by the seasonings — not the poor dead turkey. I use Bell's All Natural Seasoning which is a blend of rosemary, oregano, sage, ginger, majoram, thyme and pepper. It's terrific in a bread, celery and onion stuffing.

If you're a guest, request ahead of time that some of the dishes be prepared without animal products.

The narration provides continuity between segments of commentary from physicians, researchers, medical historians, journalists and experts in public health policy — most of whom are not specifically known as anti-vivisectionists. The Politics of Medicine and You demonstrates how The American Medical Association (AMA) was formed in 1847 to stamp out a new clinical approach called homeopathy.

In 1910 the Flexner Report, a survey of medical education in the US, established a rigid model of orthodox medical education. The AMA endorsed the Flexner model, and medical schools faced a choice: conform to the model, or pursue unorthodox methods on their own. Most schools fell quickly into line. Drug companies gave funds to the medical schools to perform drug research, and drug advertising became the main source of revenue for medical literature.

Throughout, The Politics of Medicine and You places a welcome emphasis on the clinical and fiscal advantages of preventing disease instead of searching for new drug treatments. Ultimately, that message is the key — the answer to the vicious and false charge that anti-vivisectionists don't understand or care about human health.

As the video points out, human health would be far better served by placing our efforts and resources into preventive programs based on improving lifestyle and environment than by continued reliance on animal testing and drug development.

Review: Born to Be Betrayed from Shelter Sense Magazine - The Humane Society of the US (HSUS)

The True Nature Network has created a haunting and uncompromising documentary perfect for shelters to use in their high school and adult education programs. Born to Be Betrayed boldly presents the facts, unrelentingly reveals the images, and courageously places the blame for the tragedy of cat and dog overpopulation. This 30 minute video carefully combines disturbing footage of abuse and neglect with solid arguments on the causes of such cruelty. Viewers who might otherwise reject the harsh images are compelled to watch because the narration directs them toward a greater understanding of the problem.

From puppy mills to pet shops, from breeders to abandonment, from no-kills to collections, Born to Be Betrayed depicts the attitudes and opinions that allow suffering to continue. The film makes a convincing accusation against "animal lovers" who are uneducated or unwilling to see the whole truth.

The documentary targets the uninformed attitude of the public toward euthanasia as one of the driving forces perpetuating the problem. Says Susan McDonough of the New York State Humane Association, "Virtually nothing has been written or, more convincingly, shown of the 'alternatives' to euthanasia. Born to Be Betrayed
fills this gap." For those who believe that death is the ultimate cruelty, this video presents the paradoxical results of no-kill organizations and animal collectors who share that belief.

Finally, *Born to Be Betrayed* stresses that the ultimate end to the suffering and devastation of unwanted companion animals can only come about through education of the public, redirected legislation, and massive sterilization.

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**Allen Salzberg of The New York Turtle and Tortoise Society (163 Amsterdam Ave., Ste. 365, NY, NY 10023) recommends:**

1. **Leave turtles in the wild.** Don't pick up a healthy wild turtle. Many turtles caught in the wild are endangered. If your child brings you one, put the turtle back exactly where it was found.

2. **Help a turtle cross the road.** Turtles know where they are going, so always place it on the side of the road in the direction it was heading, otherwise it will very likely return to cross the road again. Grasp the base of the tail with one hand, and from the rear of the turtle, slide your other hand beneath the bottom of the shell for support. **DO NOT LIFT THE TURTLE BY ITS TAIL** as this will cause injury.

3. **Take an injured turtle to a veterinarian or wildlife rehabilitator.** Keep the animal as quiet as possible -- transport the turtle in a dark container with a clean, moistened towel.

4. **Don't buy baby turtles!** Turtles are *not* toys! They are never suitable for small children. Because they carry salmonella, the FDA in 1975 banned the sale of all turtles under four inches. But many pet shops and street vendors illegally sell them. If you see this, report them to the local fish and game office.

5. **Don't Buy Products Made From Turtles** All seven species of sea turtles indigenous to US waters are listed as endangered. All sea turtle products -- turtle oil, leather, meat and the so-call tortoise shell -- are banned from US markets and import. Turtle products will be seized by US Customs so don't buy these products abroad. **Don't buy turtle soup!**