

# Economic struggles leave pets homeless

Cost-cutting needs threaten to separate animals from their owners

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PEORIA — In a stable, loving home environment their entire lives, Coco and Cookie, 9 1/2-year-old sisters with mixed Labr shepherd heritage, are currently holed up awaiting adoption at the Tazewell Animal Protective Society. The recent difficult a the adult pets to the shelter was a direct result of the dark economic clouds that are gathering above and threatening to stor small, on us all.

"Their owners couldn't stay in their house and were moving to an apartment where they couldn't keep their pets," said Ange TAPS, a no-kill animal shelter in Pekin. "There's been speculation that the rough economy is causing more and more people their pets anymore, or they're losing their homes or downsizing and can't take their pets with them. I think we're seeing som

Add pet separation to the lengthening list of bad things that can happen to people living in troubled, uncertain economic time increased numbers of animals being surrendered to animal shelters is most prominent in states such as Florida and Texas, suddenly unaffordable homes are wiping out entire subdivisions and instantly changing lifestyles. Central Illinois, for now, h severe application of the national trend.

Still, locally, Blackman said she constantly hears from pet owners who cite changed life circumstances because of the econ for their inability to keep a cat or dog.

The numbers for 2008 seem to prop up the argument. Because TAPS is a no-kill shelter and can only keep a finite number must be adopted before a new animal can be brought in. Dog owners seeking to surrender their pet who called in July and / list, Blackman said. The waiting list for cats stretches back to April.

"Often the need (to surrender the animal) is immediate," Blackman said. "When they find out there's a waiting list, people of solution."

Lauren Malmberg, the director of the Peoria Animal Welfare Shelter, hasn't signed on to the theory that the recession is incr PAWS, unlike TAPS, must accept any animal that is brought in because it receives funding as an animal control facility. Wh it can hold, animals must be euthanized.

"Anecdotally people tell us 'I lost my house, I can't keep my dog.' They've always told us that. Now, if anything, it's become say that because of the economic situation. People are more comfortable saying that these days," Malmberg said. "I know t about foreclosures leading to more drop-offs at shelters. It just hasn't been supported yet by any statistics that I've seen."

Blackman said she hasn't analyzed any statistics, but the link makes logical sense.

"When people are forced to make difficult choices in difficult times, it sort of makes sense that people are finding they can't said.

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