

## Shelters Picked for Grants to Help Abandoned Dogs

**The first 10 centers have been selected to receive funds to assist pet owners during the economic downturn.**

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An increase in the number of surrendered or abandoned cats and dogs as a result of nationwide home foreclosures has spilled over into animal shelters, and new requests for the Foreclosure Pets Grant Program keep rolling in.

The program, launched in March by the Humane Society of the United States in response to the economic downturn, has collected \$68,000 in private donations so far. Nearly 70 animal welfare organizations have applied for the financial assistance, according to Nancy Peterson, HSUS issues specialist.

"We realize that when times are tough for people, they often are tough for pets," she said. "Certainly in California – that is a state that has been hit real hard by this issue. It's nationwide."

The first 10 shelters have been selected to receive grants, pending verification of their nonprofit status, Peterson said. The money will help create or expand programs such as cat and dog food banks or a veterinary fund to help people who can't afford medical care for their pets.

Funds are available to animal shelters and rescue groups, not individuals. Nonprofit organizations that qualify for the \$500 to \$2,000 grants will then invest the money in programs that directly benefit pet owners who are experiencing financial hardship, Peterson said.

Many families that have no choice but to give up their home are also relinquishing their cats and dogs, she said. Others can no longer afford the medical bills, food, or the pet deposit that's required when moving to an apartment complex.

Shelters are reporting cases to the HSUS where dogs were left behind in foreclosed homes, starving to death, Peterson said. Other people are letting pets loose on the street.

"The point we want to get across is that it's cruel, irresponsible, and likely illegal to abandon a pet in that manner," she said.