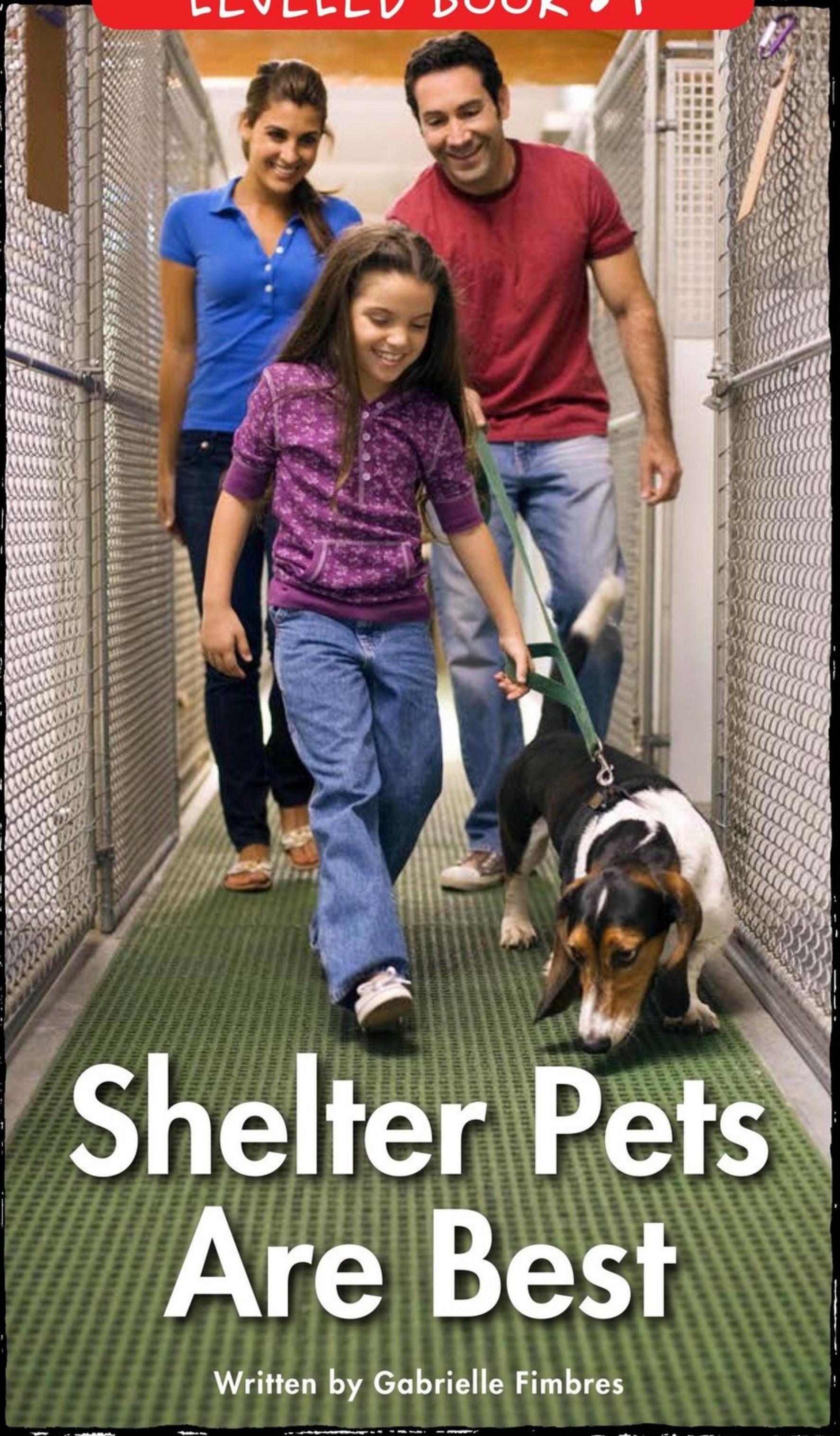


LEVELED Book • P



Shelter Pets Are Best

Written by Gabrielle Fimbres

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Dogs wait for adoption at an animal shelter.

Introduction

Buzz is a gentle, snowy white four-year-old dog who loves to have his ears scratched. But Buzz doesn't have a home. This shepherd mix lives in a cage at an animal **shelter**, which is a temporary home for animals. He is waiting for a family to adopt him.

Michelangelo is a shy two-year-old Siamese cat with pretty blue eyes. His owner couldn't take care of him, so he is at the same shelter.

Buzz and Michelangelo are just two of more than six million animals living at shelters in the United States. Pets like Buzz and Michelangelo end up at shelters because there are not enough good homes for them. If your family is looking for a new pet, you should adopt one from a shelter.



Rescued cats crowd a small shelter.



A stray dog looks for food in street trash.

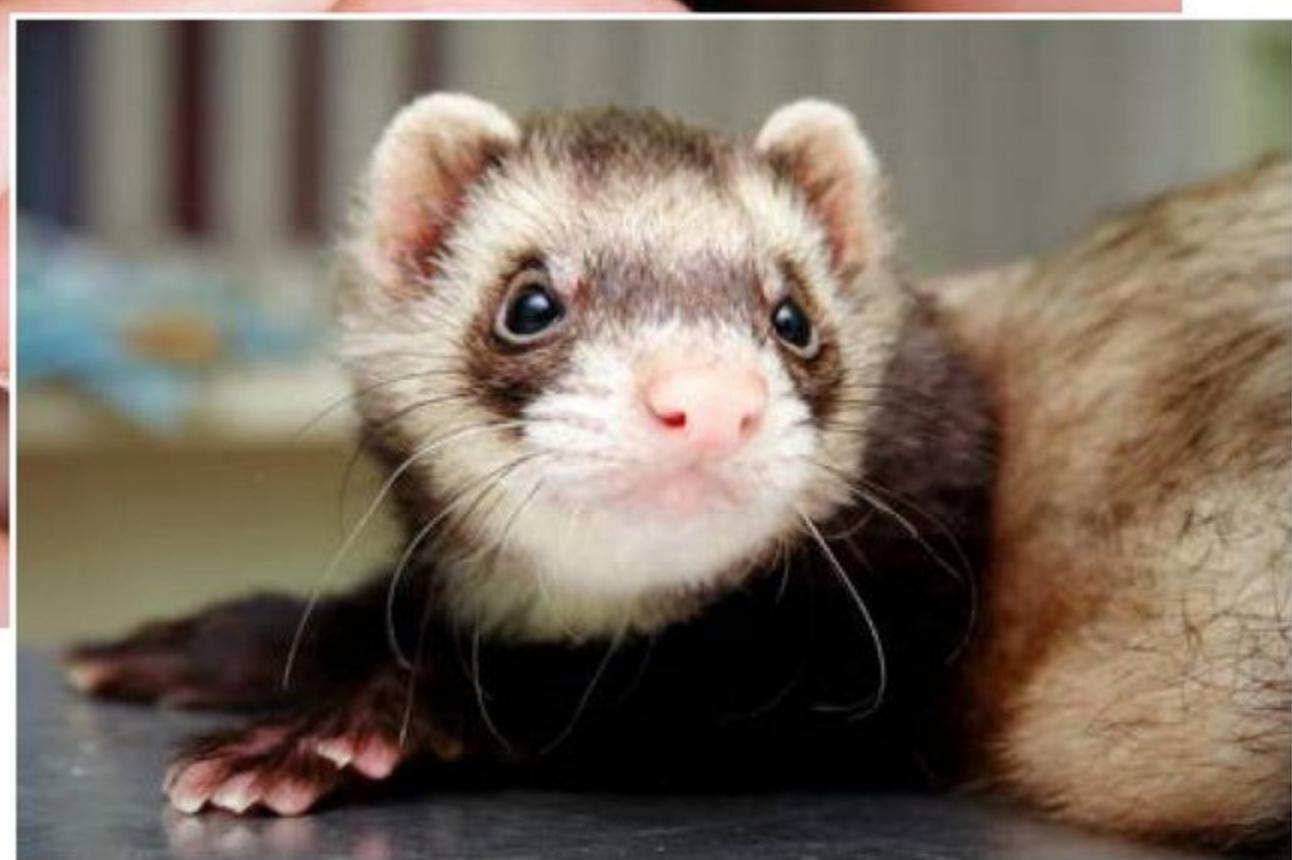
A Second Chance

The best place to find a pet is at an animal shelter. Shelters are filled with animals that need good homes. Some are there because they are lost. Others have never had homes. Some are there because their owners didn't train them properly or can't take care of them anymore.

When you adopt a shelter pet, you give an animal a second chance at a happy and healthy life.

Many Animals to Choose From

When you think of an animal shelter, you probably think of cats and dogs. But shelters are home to many other kinds of animals, too. Shelters often have rabbits, birds, guinea pigs, ferrets, and turtles available for adoption, as well as cats and dogs.



Shelters often have unusual animals such as turtles and ferrets.

Healthy Pets

Shelters are great places to find healthy pets. Most of the animals at shelters are mixed breeds, which means that their parents were different types. Studies show that mixed-breed animals are generally healthier than the **purebred** animals that many **breeders** raise to sell.

All shelter animals are checked by a **veterinarian**, or vet. The vet gives the animals shots to help them stay healthy.



A vet checks the ear of a rabbit.



A counselor talks with a puppy's new family.

Good Advice

Adoption **counselors** help make shelters good places to find pets. Families can talk with counselors who help them choose an animal that will make a good pet. The counselor asks questions about how much time the family can spend with a pet. They ask if the family has a fenced yard for a dog to play in. Answers to these kinds of questions help families pick the right pet.



A pet store may not be the right place to look for a new pet.

A pet-store worker can't always help you decide which kind of pet is best for you. The worker may not have the time or experience to help you choose the right pet. He or she might not know the right questions to ask to help you pick a pet that fits your **lifestyle**.

Shelter Services

After choosing the right pet, a family pays the shelter a fee. The money helps pay for services to keep the pet healthy and happy. Included are the visit to a vet, **obedience training**, and an operation to keep the animal from having babies. The pet may also have a **microchip** placed under its skin. If the pet becomes lost, the microchip can help someone find the owner. These services are even more reasons to adopt your pet from a shelter.



An instructor works with dogs and owners in an obedience-training class.

Sometimes, puppies for sale at pet stores or breeders come from *puppy mills*. A puppy mill is a breeding business that does not take good care of its animals. Animals from a pet store or breeder can also be expensive, sometimes costing thousands of dollars.



An animal-rescue worker assists with the removal of about three hundred dogs from a suspected puppy mill.



A Chihuahua waits for possible adoption.

Saving a Life

The final reason to get a pet from a shelter is also the most important one. Every time someone adopts a pet from a shelter, an animal's life is saved. Animal shelters have a limited amount of space and money to take care of their animals. When shelters become overcrowded, even healthy, tame pets are given a shot that painlessly ends their lives. If more people adopted from shelters, fewer pets would be "put to sleep."



A shelter animal can make a good friend.

Conclusion

When you adopt from a shelter, you are likely to get a pet that is healthy and happy. With help from an adoption counselor at a shelter, you can find a wonderful best friend. Adopting a shelter pet saves one of the millions of homeless animals in the country. Shelter pets are definitely best.

Do You Know?

About seventy-five million dogs and eighty-eight million cats live in American homes. Every year, as many as eight million cats and dogs end up living at shelters.

About half are adopted. The other half are put to sleep.

There are as many as six thousand animal shelters in the United States.

To reduce the number of homeless pets, it is important for them not to have babies. By doing a simple, safe operation, your veterinarian can make sure that your pet will not have babies. You may not like the thought of your pet having an operation. But he or she will probably be healthier and friendlier afterward. So be sure to have your pet "fixed."



Source: The Humane Society of the United States

Glossary

breeders (<i>n.</i>)	people who raise animals to sell them (p. 8)
counselors (<i>n.</i>)	people who give advice (p. 9)
lifestyle (<i>n.</i>)	the way of life typical of a person, group, or culture (p. 10)
microchip (<i>n.</i>)	a tiny electronic component used to store or process information (p. 11)
obedience training (<i>n.</i>)	a program of behavior training for dogs and their owners (p. 11)
purebred (<i>adj.</i>)	an animal that is bred from parents that are the same type, or breed (p. 8)
shelter (<i>n.</i>)	a structure that gives protection from danger or bad weather (p. 4)
veterinarian (<i>n.</i>)	a doctor who treats illnesses and injuries in animals other than humans (p. 8)

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