

Northwoods Humane Society – Alecia Austin, Shelter Manager

TIME! The older I get it seems like the less time I have and I can't be the only person who feels like this. Life moves fast and we are all just trying to keep up and still have the time to eek out some enjoyment from our world and between work and commitments. This is a hard thing to do.

So, now that you have read the first paragraph of this article you are wondering what if anything does this have to do with the price of tea in China, or in the case of this column – 'animals'.

Well, we are going to talk about time and new animals at NHS Shelter. How much time do we give them and how fast can we expect the true 'selves' to emerge. Giving them time to adjust to a new home, is so important, no matter if they came from a shelter, a home or a kennel, the adjustment does not happen overnight. Expecting too much too fast isn't fair to your new pet whose whole life has just been turned upside down and they have no idea what is going on.

The '3/3/3' rule is a general guideline for the adjustment period for any pet coming into a new home. Every animal is unique and will adjust differently.

The first '3': It can take 3 days to decompress from feeling overwhelmed, being scared and unsure of what is going on. Those first 3 days the animal may not feel comfortable enough to be themselves or to even eat or drink. A lot of time they just kind of shut down and try to hide or it could be the opposite and they try to test their boundaries. They have no idea what is going on, who you are or why they are here. They don't know how or when to express their needs to people they don't know and you don't know their cues that they use to try to explain their needs. Consider just giving them a room to get used to at first and then slowly, as they adjust to the smaller space, you can expand their space a little at a time. Try not to overwhelm them with not only going to a new home but having to immediately live face to face with your current pets. Give them their own space to start with and when everyone is more comfortable you can slowly introduce your pets one at a time – avoid the overload. This goes for introducing a new pet to young children. Make it a gradual meet – not an 'in your face' meet.

The second '3': Three Weeks – it could take 3 weeks to learn your routine, start settling in and feeling more comfortable. They are just starting to realize that this could be their new home and to have figured out their new environment. After 3 weeks they might start letting their guard down, start understanding your routine and their true personality might start to show. Behavior issues might start to show and now is the time to start working on any issues that have cropped up.

The third '3': Three Months – after 3 months they start to feel at home and feel that this finally might be their forever home. They are feeling completely comfortable and begin to build trust and make a true bond with you. They are gaining a sense of security with their new family and start to settle into your routine.

It all depends on the new pet's personality and how fast you are expecting them to conform to a whole new life. In this case, slow and steady ALWAYS wins the race! You need to take the time and give your new pet the time to adjust to a whole new and scary world that they know nothing about. After all, your goal should be to build a lifetime bond with your new pet so that you can all live 'Happily Ever After'.

Dates to Save: March 10 and 24 and April 7 and 21st – Bingo at Powell's on the Lake – 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.