

Surprise! I am not a toy...

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Has it ever occurred to you, one day, in a moment of bewilderment, to offer an animal as a surprise present? As aware as we are, it is still possible that this idea may have crossed our minds, as it has for many people! The temptation may, at times, be there; but I implore you to think twice!

Some years, the Christmas decorations are barely up by the time the shelters must begin to accept a deluge of unwanted animals that have unfortunately been given as gifts. Too frequently, we hear repeated the same comments: "he breaks everything" ... "I don't have the time to take care of him" ... "I didn't want an animal" ...

For some, animals are like toys to be put away in a closet when they become tiresome. Shelters keep repeating: the adoption of an animal must not be on impulse because it is a responsibility that requires time, money, and a commitment – all this for the entire length of the animal's life; life can easily mean up to 15 years! But once we are ready to take on all those responsibilities, the adoption of an abandoned animal is a wonderful act.

If, for some, the holiday season is a good time to adopt a new companion, it isn't for others. There is a lot of activity, of coming and going, of stress, and of confusion for an animal that is trying to adapt to a new environment.

When the holidays come, rather than give in to the temptation of giving the "gift that amazes everyone," why not offer a gift certificate (or cheque) that covers the costs of adoption. Give this along with a stuffed animal and a book on the care of a pet; it will be more than enough to make everyone jealous! Later, once calm has settled in again, you can go to the shelter with the happy recipient to pick out an animal that will suite him best. During your visit, the shelter employees will be more than happy to advise him.

Happy holidays to all!