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Create an Animal Food Bank

Your group can offer temporary relief to hungry animals everywhere by creating an animal food bank. There are thousands of homeless pets in every city that could use your help, people suffering from financial hardship who are having trouble feeding their pets and farm animals, and wild creatures that aren't able to find the food they need during extreme weather. A little help in a time of need goes a long way.

A Food Banking Success Story

In 1993 Renee Carleton was volunteering by transporting homeless pets to visit with prospective adoptive families in Southern California and decided to find a solution to the prohibitive cost of feeding rescued animals. She found many warehouses throwing away damaged containers of food and began collecting the food to distribute to shelters and rescue groups. The warehouses were happy to get rid of the excess food, and soon Renee's car wasn't big enough, and she had to borrow trucks from friends. Her service grew rapidly over the years, and the trucks were replaced by an 18-wheeler, along with warehouse space, a forklift and volunteers

- Alley Animals: www.alleyanimals.org
- The Pet Food Bank: www.thepetfoodbank.com
- Seattle Humane Society: www.seattlehumane.org/fooddrive.shtml
- Shelter Source food bank resources: www.sheltersource.org/banks.htm

Oh God of homeless things look down and try to ease the way of all the little weary paws that walk the world today.

— Author unknown

to help transport all the donated food. Renee formed the Pet Food Bank, with all equipment and services being donated, and by 2006, they were receiving up to 80,000 lbs. of pet food in a single week. The Pet Food Bank now distributes food to over 50 animal rescue organizations in Southern California and Mexico.

Where to Start

Assess the needs of your community and get a feel for what kind of support they will give you. Once you have a clear idea of the service you can establish, it's time to grasp a clear vision of why you're doing this. It can seem disheartening to bring food to homeless animals in a city where they just keep reproducing and the problem seems never-ending. Yet this little bit of relief for each animal is extremely important. One square meal goes a long way.

Organizations that provide nourishment to animals in need rely almost entirely on their communities to provide the food. You'll need to network with everybody, from the public to schools, churches, the media, veterinary offices, grocery stores — basically every business and organization in your community needs to know you exist. Let your community know you have a continuous need for appropriate animal food. Use every means of communication at your disposal and let everybody know that cash donations are welcome, too. It's just a little easier to get support if people are donating the food itself.

Contact large pet food distributors and tell them what you're doing. Let them know you'll

give them credit for their donations and then watch what happens. This is great PR for them, and they can afford to send you a lot of food.

Know where your food donations are best utilized and keep track of them. You will have regular requests for food, and you must make sure you're supporting your community fairly. That's why strong relationships and reliable records are important. If you have the luxury of a regular abundance of food arriving at your doorstep, you can allot surplus amounts to local animal shelters, feral cat and dog support, farm support, wildlife support and emergencies.

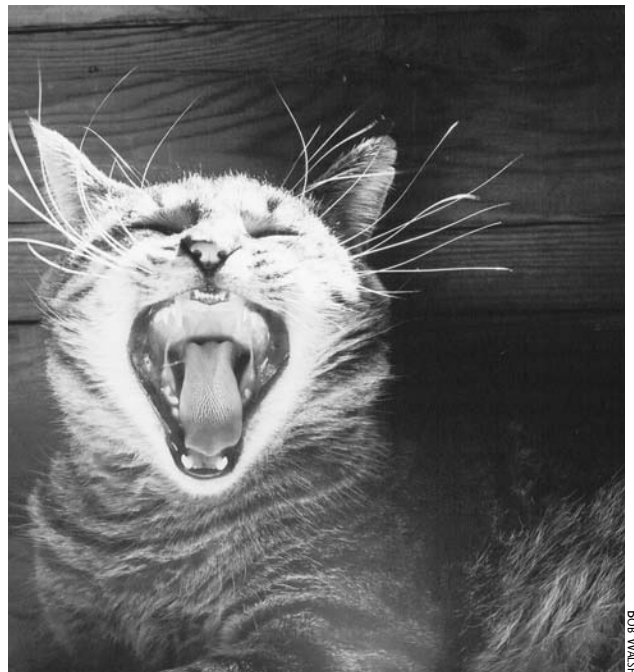
A Note on Nutrition

You will receive food donations that are inappropriate for animals. Probably a lot of them.

Alley Animals

Alley Animals, in Baltimore, Maryland, takes to the streets every night to bring meals to the city's four-legged homeless. Traveling in pairs by car and ready for anything, the courageous volunteers visit hundreds of city alleys in a single night, feeding as many as 3,000 homeless cats and dogs. They are also ready to rescue animals in desperate need, taking them to safety and getting them medical attention if necessary. This service relieves the animals' hunger for another night, helping them to survive in an inhospitable world.

If you aren't able to gratefully turn them away (they might just show up when you're not around), unopened items like cookies, pasta or flour can be donated to a human food bank. Some of the food you receive may seem incongruous to give to a dog or cat, and certainly not the most nutritious. Nevertheless, these are often starving animals, and they aren't going to be very picky. Keep in touch with your local veterinary office and ask about any nutritional concerns you may have. You'll also want a chart of animal nutritional tips to refer to.



Bob Walsh