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## Your bit for animals

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*The Hindu* Open your heart: Adopt a pet. Photo: K. Murali Kumar

***On World Animal Day, take some resolutions to make the world a better place for them.***

Today is World Animal Day. It's a celebration of those who share our planet, and a chance to make some

lasting resolutions

### **Check the product label**

From toothpaste to detergent, everything we use in our daily lives can be checked for its cruelty-free status.

Look up [www.caringconsumer.com](http://www.caringconsumer.com) (companies that do and don't test on animals) and check for the 'leaping bunny' that some products have (particularly fragrances). Toss out the non-compliant cosmetics and save the lives of millions.

Confused or can't find the company you're looking for? E-mail them and wait for an official disclosure of their animal-testing policies before buying from them.

### **Wild and free**

Turtles, birds and reptiles are better off staying wild. Get birds to visit by hanging feeders or man-made nests on your balcony ([www.natureforever.org](http://www.natureforever.org) will tell you how). Wild animals are illegal as pets, so cross them off the potential pets list and say yes to a puppy or kitten instead!

### **Shopaholics rejoice**

Finding a trendy handbag or a pair of flattering heels that doesn't use animal skin is now easier than ever. Check out brands such as Baggit or ask for the non-leather section in your favourite shoe store. Depending on the occasion, jute, bamboo, Rexene and canvas are options too. For make-up and skin care, brands such as Lush, Oriflame, Biotique, Lotus Herbals, MAC, Bobbi Brown and Estee Lauder get a thumbs-up from the furry ones.

### **Street-smart**

Do you feed a friendly neighbourhood street dog or cat? Take it to a vet when it reaches six months of age (or more) and get it spayed or neutered, so that this is the last generation of homeless animals in your locality.

### **Food for all**

Pitch in to feed the homeless. Local shelters will tell you what quantities are fed to the animals, so you can pop in with a bag of biscuits or rice.

Alternatively, check out monthly or yearly costs to sponsor food. Ask to be sent photos of the happy animals during dinnertime and pass them on to others who might be interested. Water is a rare commodity for birds and street animals and a wooden water bowl placed in a regular space will save them from dehydration and heatstroke.

### **Be a whistle-blower**

If you happen to notice someone being cruel to an animal, speak up. Keep a copy of the PCA Act (available online) handy to win the argument if it turns into a verbal tug-of-war, though most bullies merely need a warning. Avoid circuses and other institutions that support organised cruelty.

### **In good company**

There's strength in numbers, and a network of people from schools, colleges or offices can do more for animals by coming together.

A fund-raiser on campus or a pledge in a common area can gather support for the cause. Local NGOs can give you hints if you're looking for ideas.

### **Generation next**

Volunteer with a wildlife rescue group (check out [wildlifesos.org](http://wildlifesos.org)) or a local group that runs a shelter for domestic animals and encourage kids to join in. Under adult supervision, they could enjoy visits to the baby animals section or take friendly dogs for short walks.

### **Companions to love**

Pledge to adopt a needy animal from a shelter or rescue one from the street. Avoid buying any pedigree animals, particularly breeds such as German Shepherds and Persian cats that have fur coats unsuitable for our climate. If you're particular about a certain breed, ask your local animal shelter if it has abandoned pedigree animals that you can adopt.

Refrain from harsh training methods and habitual confinement that could cause aggression or depression in pets.

Never self-medicate; especially with human medicines (it could be fatal). Follow people-friendly rules such as keeping dogs on leash in public areas no matter how docile they are, and vaccinate them against rabies and other illnesses.

Relocating? Take your pet along (ask [mehulkamdar@yahoo.com](mailto:mehulkamdar@yahoo.com) for advice) or find a home amongst relatives and friends until you return.

Pets believe in the adage 'till death do us part', so if they get injured or experience poor health, see them through the tough times and keep them for life.

### **Tell a friend**

When you make an ethical choice such as buying a cruelty-free soap or adopting a shelter pup, spread the word. Set off a chain reaction in animal welfare.

(For more ideas and useful tips, visit [www.worldanimalday.org.uk](http://www.worldanimalday.org.uk))

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