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4th Grade

What changes do dogs and cats have to make to live survive as homeless pets? There are multiple answers for that question. I recently went to the Arlington Animal Shelter and interviewed one of the supervisors, a woman named Dianne Tanwater. Mrs. Tanwater told me that mutts are healthier than purebreds! She doesn't know if dogs would ever kill for prey, but cats would. Cats are strong, smart, limber, independent, and instinctual. Cats are natural survivors.

The top 3 things that must happen in a domestic pet want to survive in the wild are finding shelter, finding a water source, and learning the best ways and places to hunt and scavenge. Mastering those three conditions allows an animal to be familiar with its environment. Mrs. Tanwater told me that another reason cats are survivors is that they can go from domesticated to feral over and over again. They adapt better and faster to their environment than dogs. It takes longer for dogs to adapt like cats.

Usually the cause of pets being homeless is bad ownership and people not wanting to take on the responsibility. In the exact words of Mrs. Tanwater, "We take in ten thousand to thirteen thousand animals a year. I wish people would spay and neuter their pets, then we wouldn't have litters of puppies coming in here." Personally, I sometimes see animals on the road. I try to take them in, but most just run. Mrs. Tanwater said that most dogs are scared when they come in, but weeks later, they begin to adapt and get used to their new environment.

Connecting to what I said earlier, I compared being homeless versus having a home. My dog, butters wouldn't last a day in the wild, but my other dog Odie would. He was once feral. His survival instincts would be very handy. Animals that are used to being cared for, need to make desperate measures to survive.