

Scottish SPCA advises people not to buy pets as Christmas presents



The Scottish SPCA is advising people not to buy pets as Christmas presents for fear of a surge in abandonments. As Scotland's animal welfare charity prepares for its busiest time of year, they hope many pets will be spared the heartbreak of being dumped like unwanted gifts.

Chief Superintendent Mike Flynn said, "It's an upsetting reality that in the weeks and months after Christmas our centres are often asked to take in puppies, kittens and other pets given as presents once the novelty has worn off.

"Or, even worse, some of these pets are abandoned and left to fend for themselves.

"Clearly in these instances the owners hadn't realised that the young pet which was great fun at Christmas would need to be housetrained and properly socialised and that this would require effort on their part.

"Every year we stress that animals should never be bought on a whim or given as surprise presents, but some people clearly aren't getting the message. In January this year we took in over 240 dogs, a 9% rise on the previous year and around 250 cats – over 30% more than in 2013.

"Although we can't be certain, it's possible many of these animals were bought as gifts and for that reason we are asking people to consider whether they have the time and financial resources to be able to properly care for an animal."

In order to reduce the risks of people taking on pets to give away as presents, the Scottish SPCA will stop rehoming puppies, kittens and baby animals between 19 December and 3 January.

Chief Supt. Flynn added, "We have to ensure our rescue animals aren't being taken on by someone who just wants a new pet for Christmas.

"However, our animal rescue and rehoming centres will be open to the public throughout the festive period, including Christmas Day, and young animals can be reserved during this time.

"Our message is simple, a pet is a lifelong commitment and not a present which can be given at Christmas and then forgotten about."