

**GIVING BACK:** We derive immense pleasure from the presence of animals in our lives: enjoying birds in our yard, spotting a deer in the woods, or simply being greeted by our beloved dogs, cats, and bunnies with whom we share our homes. Though the animals need our help year-round, the holidays offer a good excuse to give something back to our fellow Earthlings.

### **1. SUPPORT LOCAL ANIMAL SHELTERS OR WILDLIFE REHAB CENTERS**

Shelters need hands-on support as much as they need money. If you can't foster an animal, consider socializing animals at shelters to increase their chances of being adopted.

### **2. GIVE THE GIFT OF COMPANIONSHIP**

Many studies indicate that caring for an animal increases health and decreases depression and blood pressure. Volunteer to visit senior citizen homes and hospitals with "therapy" dogs and cats. Your own may qualify, as well.

### **3. TEACH CHILDREN KINDNESS**

Spend time with a child making food for the outdoor critters during the cold winter: make strings of popcorn or spread peanut butter on apples and roll in bird seed.

### **4. OFFER YOUR ANIMAL SERVICES**

If you notice your neighbor's dog is alone all day, offer to walk him or her. Give a "pet-sitting" coupon to a friend or neighbor.

### **5. PLAN A VOLUNTEER VACATION**

Many animal organizations around the world offer internship and volunteer opportunities, often providing room and board in exchange.

### **6. BE PREPARED**

If you ever see an animal in need of assistance, you can act quickly if you have some gloves, a box, a blanket, a leash, and treats in your trunk.

### **7. CREATE A BACKYARD WILDLIFE REFUGE**

If your yard provides water and food sources and a place for animals to raise their young, you've already done it. Get certified by the National Wildlife Federation.

### **8. MAKE PLAY TIME A PRIORITY**

Our companion animals crave our love and attention, especially if we work outside of the house all day long. Schedule play time and regular walks to keep them happy and healthy.

### **9. BAKE – AND SHARE – VEGAN GOODIES**

"If it tastes good, they will eat it" is a mantra I live by. Help farmed animals by demystifying vegan desserts. Give them as gifts to – everyone!

### **10. LEAVE THEM ALONE**

Probably the best way to help non-human animals is to leave them be. Make choices in your life that do not interfere with, exploit, or harm animals and their habitats.

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