



Aiding shelter animals through responsible recycling!

How to Start Cans for Pets at an Animal Shelter Near You

What is Cans for Pets and Why is it Important?

Cans for Pets is a project designed to aid shelter animals through responsible recycling. This program encourages community members to recycle their aluminum pet food cans to generate revenue from their scrap value. That revenue is then donated directly to the animal shelter for things like food, blankets, kitty litter, adoption support, medical supplies and more.

Aluminum is the most valuable material in the recycling bin. Infinitely recyclable, producing products from recycled aluminum saves significant energy and resources. In fact, it takes approximately 95% less energy to make a product out of recycled aluminum than from raw materials. Unfortunately, according to an industry survey, an estimated 65% of aluminum beverage cans are recycled compared to only 20% of aluminum pet food cans. By starting a Cans for Pets program in your community you can save energy, resources, and landfill space, all while generating crucial resources for local shelter animals.

Step 1: Find your partners

The first step in launching your new chapter of Cans for Pets is to find partners for the program. Find a local shelter to benefit the program – whether it is a specialty shelter or a wildlife center, these shelters are always in need of resources to help them provide care to their animals. Meet with representatives from your local shelter about the program and encourage them to become the beneficiary of your Cans for Pets program, helping to generate resources for their animals, while fostering recycling, and drawing in new members of the community.

The next step is to find the best place in your community to sell your aluminum for scrap value. Scrap yards purchase various metals and other materials from the public and then sell those materials to recycling yards or to buyers to eventually become new products. Scrap yards will typically pay between \$0.50 and \$0.60 per pound of aluminum cans, which can add up to significant amounts over the course of the year. Be sure to contact a number of local scrap yards to find the best prices to generate the most resources as the money generated from scrapping the aluminum pet food cans is what will be donated to the animal shelter.

Getting to a scrap yard or the local animal shelter is not always convenient for community members. A great way to overcome this issue is to set up drop off locations throughout the community. Coordinate with the store manager of a local pet supplies store, groomer, library, or vet to set up a "drop-off location" for the pet food cans. The host location's only responsibility is to host a collection bin for community members to drop off their aluminum pet food cans, while they reap the benefits of the additional customer traffic.

Finally, find partners in the community to help you collect and transport cans to the scrap yard from your drop off points in the community. A strong network of volunteers can make a huge difference and help recycle more cans, conserving more resources and generating more resources for shelter animals! Your team will need to empty cans from drop off locations on a weekly basis to make sure that the cans do not overflow their containers or cause issues with odors.

Gather Materials

After you have acquired all of your partners, you will need to find and acquire appropriate materials to advertise and educate the community about Cans for Pets.

Acquire and place a collection bin at every one of your drop-off locations, including the animal shelter. Make sure these bins are large enough to hold a sufficient number of aluminum pet food cans, but small enough to fit in the space allocated to you by your host location. The bins should be waterproof, to prevent issues from wet cans, and should have a lid to contain any odor. Be sure to line the collection bin with a plastic bag to keep the bin clean to also reduce any smells. Your bins can be as simple as a plastic trash can, or you can check out www.RecycleAway.com for more options of sturdy and sleek recycling bins. Save funds by asking businesses, or other community organizations to donate collection bins and bag liners.

To keep your volunteers safe, always have them wear gloves when handling the cans. These gloves don't need to be heavy duty - simple gardening gloves, or canvass gloves with grips like these will prevent small lacerations from the cans and lids.

Effective signage on these bins and throughout the community will let community members know more about the Cans for Pets program without being overly complicated. These flyers and signs should include a brief description of the program, the participating shelter's address, and drop-off location information. Attach signage to your bins and display them at the animal shelter, while distributing flyers at libraries, shelter events, community events, religious events, and more!

From Bin to Scrap

Before officially launching the Cans for Pets program, set up a transportation system for the aluminum pet food cans. On a regular basis, you or one of your volunteers will need to pick up cans from the drop-off location(s). Be sure to separate all of the aluminum cans from the steel, tin, or bimetal cans that may be mixed in. Aluminum cans have a higher scrap value than any other type of can, so weighing aluminum cans separately will generate more resources for the shelter.

It's easy to separate aluminum cans from other types of metals using the magnet test. Simply use a magnet to sort through the cans - aluminum cans will NOT stick to the magnet, while other types of

metal cans will. You can usually recycle both types of materials at the scrap yard – so be sure to bring both after the cans have been separated.

You and your volunteers will never need to count individual cans. There are 32 aluminum pet food cans in every pound. Simply use the weight of aluminum pet food cans reported at the scrap yard to calculate the total amount of cans.

Increase Your Impact

One way to increase your impact is to recruit a corporate sponsor. Talk to local business owners or branch operators of national chains to include them in your Cans for Pets program! Corporate sponsors can match your donation, pledge to donate per can recycled, or pledge a flat donation to the local shelter. Whatever their contribution, be sure to include your sponsor on any press or promotional materials to give them credit for supporting homeless animals.

How to Launch the Program

Work with the animal shelter to choose a launch date that works with their event schedule. Often, it is a good idea to piggy-back the launch of your Cans for Pets with another event - this tactic ensures better attendance and reduces the hassle of finding a venue. Work with the animal shelter and any corporate sponsors to promote the program and launch on their website, social media pages, and community boards.

The best ways to inform the public about Cans for Pets is through traditional and social media and through word of mouth. Invite the media to cover the launch and program with a press release. A press release informs the media of the time and place of the event, a brief description of the program, and what makes it “newsworthy.” Include a quote from the animal shelter about why they are excited to be working with the Cans for Pets program. Send your press release in the body of your email to the newsroom at all your local television, radio, print, and internet new sources in your area. If possible, include an image of an animal near one of your Cans for Pets collection bins or signs.

On the day of the launch, be sure to have your printed materials including a sign with the Cans for Pets logo, and the logos of your shelter and any sponsors and several copies of informational brochures. During the launch event hand out brochures, demonstrate the magnet test, and explain how the program works and why it is so important to the media and to the public. Take pictures throughout the event and post to social media!

Spread the Word

The more people aware of Cans for Pets, the more successful the program will be. Spread the word using your own social media and encourage friends, family, and neighbors to post about the program as well. Reach out to local groups, libraries, religious institutions to promote Cans for Pets on their Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, and more. Post flyers or posters in public spaces in your community, like the local coffee shop, community center, grocery store, storefronts, and more!

Keep Track of Your Progress

Always keep track of your progress, keeping donations accounted for and bins collected on a timely schedule. Keep an accurate and up-to-date schedule of and for your volunteers to pick up cans from the drop-off location(s). Key metrics to track are: dates of can pickups, pounds of materials, and the amount received for recycling the materials. Additionally, keep records of sponsor contributions and a running total of the amount of cans recycled and the amount raised for the shelter.

Have Fun!

Be sure to keep the fun in Cans for Pets! This program is an easy way for the community to protect the environment while benefiting homeless animals. Collect cute pictures of animals, cans, or people dropping off their cans! Post updates on how many cans you're collecting and how many animals you're helping to keep the public aware of how you're helping homeless animals and the environment!