

# A perfect new love, fur sure

**T**HIS is a service-oriented column. Valentine's Day is coming and some folks have decided, fle on fragrance, enough with roses, shove those cheapo fake-o Sam Vuitton handbags that are hustled on pushcarts. This year they'll do what's alive. Something warm, snuggly, lovey. Something to hug. They'll get a pet.

Turtles, even if you put them in peopleneck sweaters, aren't what you'd call really cuddly. Parrots talk more than mothers-in-law. Rabbits could give a guy a complex. Lizards are best off in shoes. Hamsters aren't welcome at Westminster. Few want to introduce even their stepkids to a snake. Females won't leap for joy should lovers gift them with an iguana. And a centipede isn't exactly popular because who wants to handle a hundred cases of Athlete's Foot. So we're talking mostly dogs and cats.

With everybody from **Madonna** to **Angelina** adopting, I monitored an adoption to see what it's like. But I didn't do Malawi or Namibia or even downtown Cambodia. I did 38th Street. **Bide-A-Wee**. Although I'm on ASPCA's advisory board, my own dogs' vet, **Dr. Berman**, is vice chairman of Bide-A-Wee. Which, by the way, in auld Scottish means stay-a-while. (That's Bide-A-Wee, not Berman).

First to make my acquaintance was a gorgeous wet Westie who'd just had a bath. He was friendly. Very friendly. Lord, was he friendly. He jumped up, down, in, out and across my previously dry suit while a pleas-

ant young man was making an application to adopt. He had first to respond to the questionnaire (the pleasant young man, not the wet Westie):

- Have you had a pet before?
- Have you a pet now?
- What qualities do you seek in one?
- What's your schedule like?
- Do others live in the household? Are there children?

■ Did/Will they get regular veterinary check-ups?

So why all the questions since you don't have to answer that much to become a citizen?

The qualities someone's seeking weed out those who just figure an animal would look good on the lawn of their country house or just wants it to catch rats or just needs it to terrify a pesky neighbor. If the adoptee mother is lonely and just yearns to coo-oo, a small creature is best. If the adoptee father is outdoorsy and looking to romp in the fields, a big dog is best.

A person's schedule tells whether a new live-in will be alone and lonely all day. Such situations call for a mellow companion, not one who needs constant play. Think in terms of an old lover. A seriously old lover. And young children require something that's not always barking, sniffing, licking, yipping and nipping. Think a young lover.

Bide-A-Wee also requires proof of pet eligibility. Does your landlord allow permanent, four-legged tenants?

The adoption screener was going through all this with the pleasant young man who

said he has a wife and she loves dogs and he loves dogs and he's always had dogs when the Westie gave herself a shake that gave off more water than Niagara. He then went for a little bonding walk with the wet Westie to see could they woof happily ever after.

To reduce the furry creatures surrendered by owners for behavioral problems, staffers explained they have even innovated a learning center. The equivalent of a real house with ringing phones, vacuum cleaners, deliverymen, doorbells, furniture, strangers running around. The idea is to teach a puppy, a kitten, or any confused or aggressive new household pet good in-home manners. This concept, unfortunately, was too late to have aided **Kevin Federline**.

The next parent-to-be to arrive was **Jocelyn Crowley**. Her sister, **Monica Crowley**, was on MSNBC. Her husband, **Alan Colmes**, is on Fox News. Their friends had earlier adopted happily at this not-for-profit, no-kill shelter. To gird for the time her adored aging beagle might leave, she was hoping for another beagle.

Two beagles were in residence. Since shelter animals come from a variety of backgrounds, shelter vice president **Ann Cohen** didn't know their history. All I know is, the first one applied herself to my ankles as if they'd been married in Big Macs.

At this point, one of the workers poked his head in with: "So this leopard complained to his analyst, 'Whenever I look at my wife I see spots in front of my eyes,' and the analyst said, 'That's to be ex-



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pected' and the leopard said, 'But, doc, she's a zebra!'"

The result of the Jocelyn-beagle love affair I don't know because, after that joke, I left. My reason was I had to feed my own two dogs — that's although I knew they weren't even hungry.

To adopt a furry bundle of love, call Bide-A-Wee at (212) 532-4455, or on the Web go to [bideaweewee.org](http://bideaweewee.org).



**Cindy Adams**