

## FACETIME

BY SAM WHITING

# Mutts Rule

SPCA director Daniel Crain on why it's crucial to mix up the gene pool

**D**aniel T. Crain has a nicer office than Mayor Gavin Newsom and a more loyal constituency. Crain, 41, is President of the San Francisco SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals).

**Is it true San Francisco is the best city in the country in which to be a homeless animal?**

True. The relationship we have with Animal Care and Control allows us to provide a home for every adoptable cat and dog. That's why our save rate is double that of any other city in the country.

**What is the difference between the two organizations?**

Animal Care and Control is funded by the city to protect the city from vicious dogs and take care of any cases of animal abuse. San Francisco SPCA is a private company.

**What is the SPCA budget?**

Just under \$13 million.

**Where does it come from?**

The public, \$5 and \$10 check-writers that have been with us for years and years. We have programs that we will guarantee that if you pass we will take care of your pet for the rest of its life.

**What's the homeless population?**

It fluctuates. As different cities close their feral cat programs the cats end up coming into San Francisco. There's hundreds and hundreds of feral cats out there that are being taken care of by the SPCA.

**What about dogs?**

If the animal is adoptable, based on medical and behavior, then it is admitted to our shelter and we will hold that animal as long as it takes to get it adopted.

**They're never put to sleep?**

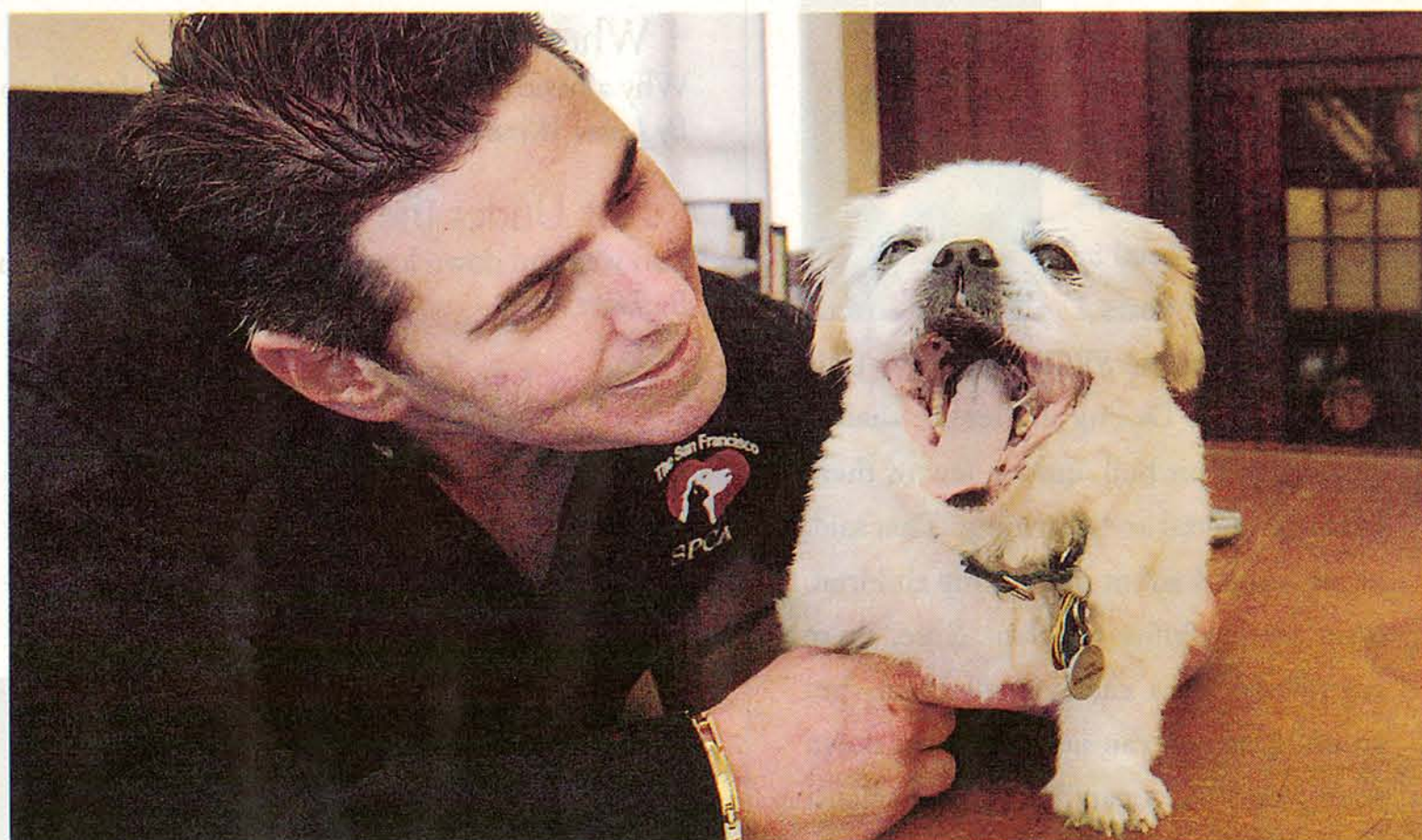
As long as they stay above the criteria for behavior.

**How many vicious dogs do you get?**

The intake last year was 5,700. It was down. It's a good sign.

**Why do we need pit bulls?**

That same day that those pit bull attacks took place I can guarantee you somebody in the city



got bit by a poodle.

**But poodles don't kill anybody?**

Right.

**What's the biggest hazard in dog ownership?**

One out of every four dogs in this shelter that's purebred has been turned into Animal Care and Control.

**Why are purebreds more risky than mutts?**

If you're breeding two exact purebred dogs, you're bringing in all those positive traits and all those negative traits.

**So your odds are better with a mutt?**

Yes. Crossbreed. I tell people that, "If it looks funny you've got a better chance than if it looks perfect." I have five dogs, all pure, all rescues. I've got a shih tzu on Prozac because he was bred and bred and bred, but he's crazy.

**No cats?**

My dogs chase cats. My dogs are older and came with behavior issues. That's why I took them.

**You take them for walks?**

With my bird on my shoulder.

**Where do you live?**

Up in Bernal. In a house with a big yard.

**Unlimited dogs?**

The rule is three dogs per adult. There are two adults.

**So you're one dog short?**

Yes. But there is one in the shelter right now that's been calling my name.

**Have you always been an animal person?**

In school I did guinea pig rescue. It didn't make my high school years any easier. I walked around with a shirt that said "Guinea Pig Power."

**Can animals recognize an animal person?**

Absolutely.

**Is the SPCA only about cats and dogs?**

We've got 19 retired police horses on a ranch in Sonoma. They live like kings and queens.

**Is this your dream job?**

It's a calling. I really believe it.

**Like the priesthood?**

Pretty much. ♦

*E-mail Sam Whiting at [swhiting@sfchronicle.com](mailto:swhiting@sfchronicle.com).*