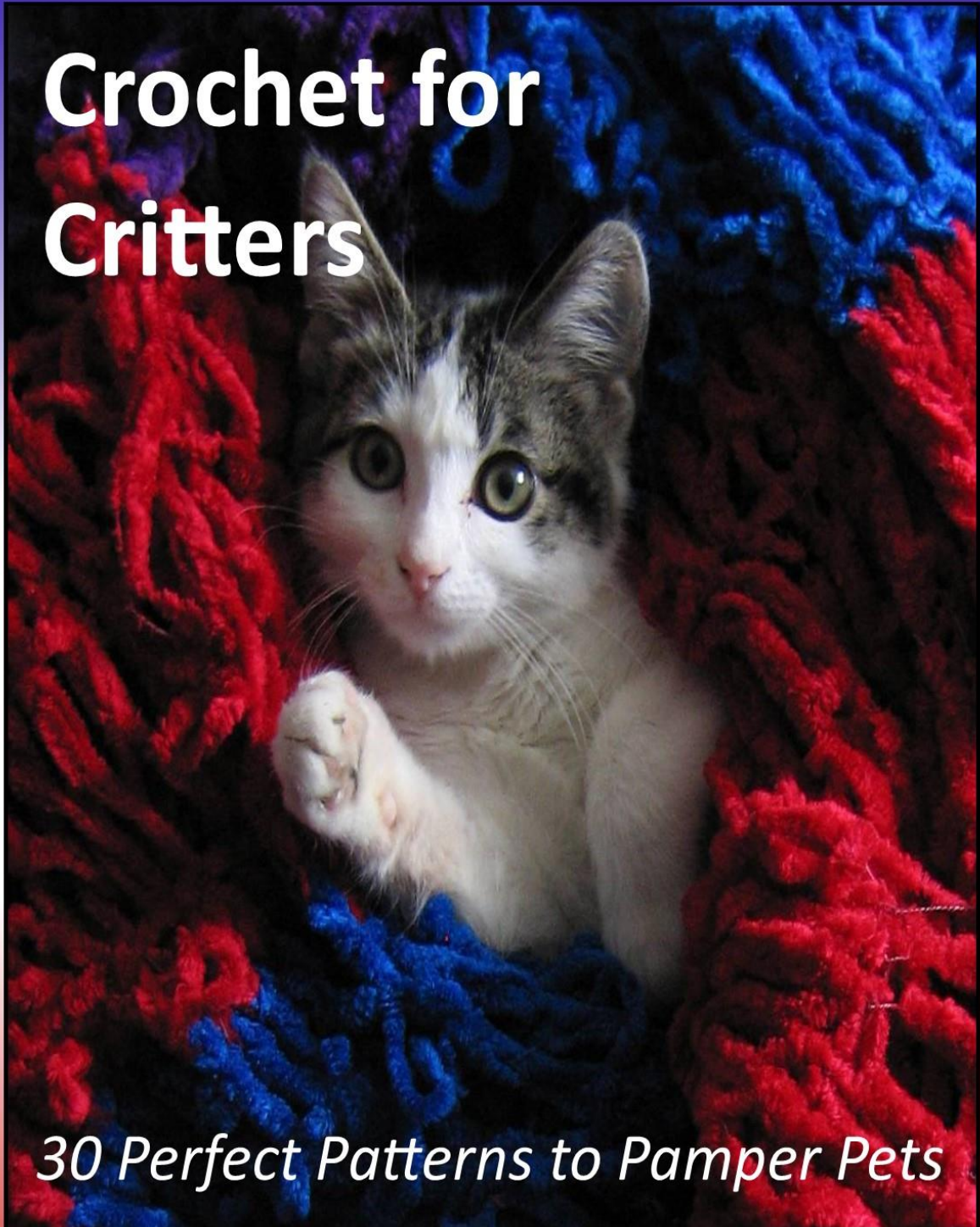


Crochet for Critters



30 Perfect Patterns to Pamper Pets

*By Linda Kastiel Kozlowski
Founder, Comfort for Critters*

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By purchasing this book, you are supporting the Comfort for Critters program, which donates free handmade blankets to comfort homeless pets living in 300+ animal shelters across the US. While these pets await adoption, the blankets provide a comfortable bed year-round. When they are adopted, their blanket goes with them, providing something familiar as they adjust to their "forever family."

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This book, as with everything I do, is dedicated to my mom.

*She taught me everything useful in life,
beginning with crocheting the perfect Granny Square.*

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PUDDLES MARIA

It was one of the hardest choices I've ever made. Normally my gut will lead me in an unmistakable direction, with my conscience playing a supporting role. Decisions usually come quick, even when I'd rather delay a hard choice. But this time was different. We were adding to our family and I was staring into the eyes of Anna and Benjamin. Brother and sister, sharing a small enclosure at the DuPage County Animal Shelter. The question was, "Who would be joining me on the car ride home?"

The decision was especially difficult because this was the first time I was choosing a pet to join our family. I stood there looking at these two precious kitties, but also back at my childhood, where pets were not allowed. Well, almost not allowed. I hoped that this kitty would be spending decades with me, and I knew that we would spare nothing to give him, or her, a full and happy life. This kitty would win the lottery, but my family would certainly win too.

The first "pet" to join me as a child, was a tiny black kitten, after she was abandoned by her mother. Her hideaway, in our neighbor's camper, was discovered soon after she gave birth, and she ran for the hills. The kittens scattered as well, except for this one. I nursed her for two days, but fate had other plans for her. She passed away in my 10-year-old hands, and my heart broke. I changed that day, but my parents changed as well. It broke my father's heart to see what I went through, so pets were officially banned going forward. Looking back on the situation, and having experience now with my own pets, I realize that money played a role as well. Caring for pets properly is expensive, and with four kids, adding another mouth to feed wasn't a great idea.

That all changed when I turned 18, became an "adult", and more importantly had a boyfriend who wasn't afraid of my dad! For my 18th birthday he gave me a kitten named "Puddles Maria" and I was in love at first sight (but only with the kitten, not the guy!). That "critter"

accompanied me through life for over 20 years, and was my emotional support animal before there was such a thing. She got me through college, a failed first marriage, moving to the west coast and back, and the loss of both my parents. She was there through more pregnancies than I care to count, and welcomed home both my sons into our family. She taught me that the creatures we share our home with, inhabit a section of our heart reserved only for them. It's a love that's not greater, nor lesser, than other loves. It's completely different, boasting a beauty all its own.

So as I gazed into the green eyes of the two kitties before me, I felt the weight of the decision. I then decided, Anna would be joining our family. Having a husband and two small boys at home, I thought I needed to balance the scales a bit and add another female to the mix. In case you're wondering, all our subsequent pets (and we've had many), are female!

So the decision was made by my gut, and now my conscience stepped forward to do its thing. I remember asking if there was anything, ANYTHING, I could do for all the kitties that I couldn't take home that day. I was thinking of Benjamin, but certainly couldn't look him in the eye. It was then that I felt a tap on my shoulder, from a familiar Guide, and a "calling". As the shelter worker explained that I could bring in old towels, which would be used in the cats' enclosures (giving them something soft to lay on), I knew just what I was being prompted to do. I asked if they'd accept crocheted blankets instead. With that, Comfort for Critters was born.

I learned to crochet around the time that black kitten passed away, and had kept it up by crocheting baby blankets for my boys and any baby who joined my extended family. However, crocheting went from a hobby to become my passion at that single moment. The shelter was thrilled, and a bit surprised, and even promised to send my blankets home with the pets, once they were adopted. They explained that having the scent of the shelter on the blankets would provide comfort for the pets as they adjusted to their new surroundings in their forever home. This was the first of many pieces that just fell into place for Comfort for Critters. I knew how much my two boys had loved their blankets, and how attached they became. It was truly their "comfort object" of choice. Why should a four-legged critter be any different?

So the journey began in a single shelter, with a single kitten named Anna. I thought I'd make a handful of blankets, dropping them off as I had time. As the saying goes, "if you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans." I would soon learn about just how many shelters there are, how underfunded and understaffed they are, and just how much of a need for comfort there was in the world. Much to my surprise (and sadness), that need for comfort has only grown, over the years.

ANIMAL SHELTERS

The history of animal shelters can be traced back to 1869, and a woman named Caroline Earle White. Caroline's parents made sure she received a good education, something which was highly unusual for girls at that time. She witnessed the inhumane treatment animals received in her neighborhood, and it affected her deeply. It wasn't pets who she saw mistreated, but the horses and mules who would pull heavy wagons down the streets of Philadelphia. Drivers would beat, and otherwise abuse, the animals to get them to keep going, or to move faster. Caroline never forgot these scenes, and when she married an attorney in 1854 who supported her concerns, her "animal activism" began.

She formalized this activism by joining the board of the newly created Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1867. After being relegated to non-management roles at the PSPCA, she decided that her future would have to be with an organization where women were in charge. She, along with 29 other women, started their own branch of the PSPCA in 1869, with a focus on helping the many stray dogs in the area. This branch, called the "Women's Animal Center", became the first animal shelter in the United States, and is still open today in Bensalem, Pennsylvania.

Among the many things this first shelter, and Caroline White, accomplished was the establishment of the American Anti-Vivisection Society (in 1883), the installation of water fountains in cities so that the horses and mules had clean drinking water, the opening of the first clinic in the US which provided free veterinary care for those unable to pay, and promoting legislation in 1907 that enforced the humane treatment of animals being transported on the country's railroad system. Wow, what an amazing group of ladies! It reminds me of one of my favorite quotes by Margaret Mead, *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."*

Of course, the Women's Animal Center went on to care for cats and other animals, and promoted the concept of "sheltering animals." With their example in place, other cities followed suit. Tremendous growth happened in the 20th Century as towns identified two important roles for shelters to play, in the lives of their citizens. Shelters would provide care and protection for homeless pets, but would also protect citizens from any dangers posed by some animals. These dangers included pet bites, attacks and zoonotic diseases.

Today there are roughly five thousand animal shelters in the United States. The term "Humane Society" and "SPCA" (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) are generic labels, which can be used by any organization. There's no affiliation with any national, or larger, group. Since it's an unstructured industry, concrete numbers on what's happening inside shelters are hard to come by. Amazingly (at least to me) there's simply no national reporting agency for animal shelters.

There are approximately 90 million dogs in the country and 94 million cats, but only about 25-30% of those pets came through the animal shelter system. Animal shelters will see 6 to 6.5 million pets come through their doors in a typical year. Of these, roughly half are cats, and the other half dogs. Sadly, only about 50% of those "critters" find forever homes.

Now is probably a good time to address the "Kill" versus "No Kill" issue, in caring for abandoned pets. The second most common question I'm asked is, "Why would Comfort for Critters help any shelter that didn't have a firm 'no-kill' policy?" (For the most common question, you'll have

to read beyond this section!). I sadly know that my answer to this question is what keeps some volunteers off the CFC team.

Support Kill or No-Kill Shelters? Not such an easy question!

So exactly why would we provide our free blankets to animal shelters which are not designated as “no-kill”? Allow me to provide some good news and bad news. The good news is that pet overpopulation has fallen dramatically since the 1970s. At that time, animal control agencies euthanized up to 20 million pets every year. This common practice was done simply to control the pet population. The US Humane Society estimates that during that decade, a full 25% of the nation’s dogs were simply living on the street. Another positive trend, which has helped drive down euthanasia, is the dramatic increase in households with pets. In the 1970s, there were 67 million households with pets, but today that number is 135 million!

As recently as 1990, 17 million pets were euthanized in animal shelters. While the numbers have improved, the bad news remains, that today there are roughly 2-4 million pets euthanized. One estimate for 2018, indicates only 2 million pets were euthanized. Way too many, to be sure, but a huge improvement. So how did this happen? It’s another example of an issue that seems insurmountable, until someone takes it on! Or in this case, a group of committed citizens in sunny California.

About 20 years ago, the “no-kill” movement began in San Francisco, California. This community banded together and committed to finding a home for every pet that entered its shelters. Their campaign promoted adoption and used spaying and neutering as a better way to control the cat and dog population. Fortunately, this idea soon spread throughout the US, saving millions of pets each and every year.

End of free sample.

Please enjoy the two sample patterns also included below!

Blanket in the Round



I don't quite know why, but I'm just drawn to making these round and colorful blankets. Part of the allure is that I get to use up the tiny bits of leftover yarn, which I don't bag for volunteers (they are way too small). I just love keeping them out of the landfill and crafting them into super-colorful blankets! I sometimes use only solid colors (pictured on the left), and other times I alternate a row of solid with a row of variegated yarn (pictured on the right). It truly all depends on what I have in front of me at the time! Either way, they always turn out beautifully.

Special Note from Linda: *If the blanket begins to "ripple" (rather than laying flat) after any of the rows, just do one complete row of all DC all the way around (ie. do not put 2 DC in any one space). This helps the blanket lay flat. It's a bit of trial and error, to get a round blanket to lay flat, but stick with it! With that said, please don't be concerned if it still does "ripple" a bit. The pets will love curling up on it just the same (maybe even more so)!*

Gather your comfort tools: Use a crochet hook size "I" and one skein washable yarn. As I mentioned, it's a great way to use the little bits of extra yarn you may have. Even a very small ball of yarn will finish one row around. Have fun switching colors and being creative!



Get started helping pets - CH 5, SL to join into a ring.

Row 1 - CH 2 (counts as DC), 11 DC into the center of the ring, SL to join, tie off. *At start of each row you'll join a new color (if you want) into the top of any space that has 2 DC. I find that I can just "stitch over" the tail of the previous color, so that I don't have to "weave in" the end!*

Row 2 - CH 2, DC in the same ST as the CH 2, 2 DC in all ST from previous row, sl to join (24 total dc, counting CH 2 at start), tie off.

Row 3 - CH 2, DC in same ST as the CH 2, DC in next ST, *2 DC, 1 DC*, repeat between * around the circle, SL to join, tie off.

Row 4 - CH 2, DC in same ST as the CH 2, DC into the next 2 ST, *2DC, 1 DC in next 2 ST*, repeat between * around the circle, SL to join, tie off.

Row 5 - CH 2, DC in same ST as the CH 2, DC into the next 3 ST, *2 DC, 1 DC in next 3 ST*, repeat between * around the circle, SL to join, tie off.

Row 6 - CH 2, DC in same ST as the CH 2, DC into the next 4 ST, *2 DC, 1 DC in next 4 ST*, repeat between * around the circle, SL to join, tie off.

Row 7 - 16 - Continue with additional rows, following the same pattern as above, until blanket is the desired size. Each additional row will have one more dc between sets of 2 dc in one space.

Key:

CH – chain

SL - slip stitch

ST – stitch

HDC - half double crochet

DC - double crochet

Striped Granny



I adore Granny Squares, since they represent what got me hooked on crochet, as a little girl. I simply love the uniformity and the combination of colors. So I was thrilled to learn a way to do the same stitch, but in rows. It just adds a bit of variety, when I want to use up bits and pieces of yarn. Hope you enjoy it as well!

Gather your comfort tools - For best results, use a 4-ply yarn and a “K” sized hook. If you decide to make your blanket a bit smaller or larger than the one this pattern creates, just be sure that your initial chain is a multiple of 3, plus 2.

Get started helping pets - CH 50.

Row 1 - Work 1 SC in 2nd CH from hook. Continue working SC into each chain till the end (turn).

Row 2 - Chain 2, then work 1 DC into first ST. *Skip 2 ST, work 3 DC all into next ST (makes a cluster) *. Repeat between * until you have just 3 ST left, skip 2 ST, then put a single DC into last ST. You will end up with a row that begins and ends with a DC, and has the “clusters” in between. (*Change yarn color, if you like!*)

Row 3 - From now on you'll be working in the spaces between the clusters of the previous row. CH 2, then work 3DC into each space between clusters. You'll end the row with a single DC into the top of the final ST in the previous row. (*Change yarn color, if you like!*)

Row 4+ - Repeat rows 2 and 3 until you reach the desired size. You can change yarn every row, or every group of rows. Just be sure to weave in all the ends (arg!).

Border – A simple border is very nice for this stitch. For the example, I trimmed the entire piece in two rows of HDC, putting 3 HDC into each corner.

***What shelters have to say:** “We here in Somerset are very appreciative of your donated blankets. We always send our foster babies home with their favorite. I have so many photos showing our foster babies tucked into their favorite blanket!” ~ Pulaski County Humane Society in Somerset, KY*

Key:

CH – chain
ST - stitch
HDC – half double crochet
DC – double crochet
SC – single crochet

CONNECT ONLINE

We'd love for you to keep up-to-date on what we're doing to comfort homeless pets. Please subscribe to our free newsletter or follow us on social media!

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Comfort for Critters Website	www.ComfortForCritters.org
Email	Info@ComfortForCritters.org
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/ComfortforCritters/ <i>Feel free to also join the private, “The Comfort for Critters Team” Facebook group</i>