

HOW TO FIND HOMES FOR HOMELESS PETS



FINDING A NEW HOME

Something has happened in your life and you can no longer take care of your pet. Or perhaps you have found a stray cat or dog and need to find him/her a home. Maybe a friend or a relative has died leaving one or more pets to be placed in new homes. You want to be able to do something to help find this animal a new and loving permanent home, rather than turn him/her over to the pound or the local humane society, where they may be euthanized.

We hope the suggestions in this booklet will help you achieve your goal. We will show you how to create an effective flyer with some tips on taking a good photograph of your pet, and how to write imaginative text that will capture the attention of a prospective adopter for a flyer or a classified ad in the paper.

We discuss the preparation of the pet; making sure that the animals' vaccinations are up to date, and that he/she is healthy, and that he/she is bathed and groomed.

And we will show you how to take advantage of the networks already established to advertise your animal.

Most importantly, we walk you through the screening process. We assume you don't want to just give the pet away without checking up that he/she is going to a good responsible home. We suggest what questions you may want to ask to find out if this will be a suitable new home.

Perhaps you have found a stray and need to know what to do. Or perhaps you need to find some solutions to be able to keep a beloved pet in your home.



ADORABLE PUPPY LOOKING FOR A GOOD NEW HOME

Molly is 4-months-old and is an Australian Shepherd mix. She is housebroken, loves kids and will grow to about 35 lbs. She is spayed and current on all her shots. Call evenings at 555-3587.



FELIX WANTS TO MEET YOU

Felix is a 3-year-old tabby with a loving nature. He loves other cats and dogs. Will make a wonderful companion. He loves to sit on laps and have his ears stroked.

Call Jimmy at 555-3528, mornings best.

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THE GROUNDWORK – PREPARING GOOD CLEAR FLYERS

- Describe the appearance, size, and age of the animal.
- Describe his/her nature and appealing qualities.
- Include the pet's name
- State that the pet is spayed or neutered.
- Define any limitations, e.g. not good with cats/small children/other dogs/other cats.
- Use a good photograph. Color is best. Copy places like Kinko's can help with these.
- Be sure to put in your phone number, and time you can be reached.
- Depending on the situation in your area, you might want to add "No Bunchers" to your ad. Bunchers are people who pose as prospective adopters, pretending to be loving and concerned. The pets they obtain are then sold to licensed B dealers who in turn sell the pets to research laboratories. See further information on this subject in the telephone screening section.

Tips on taking good animal photographs

When you take photographs use a background that is in contrast to the animal in order to highlight his/her best features. Keep it simple and clear with few background distractions. Use a person, a hand or some other means to show the scale of the pet. Take the time to get a calm relaxed photo that does not present the pet as aggressive or scared.

**The flyer is an advertisement.
Make it clear, fun and appealing.**



Person to show
the height and
size of the dog

Clear picture of
the animal

Contrasting
background

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NETWORK

Take flyers everywhere.

- To your veterinarian.
- To your work.
- To pet supply stores.
- To community bulletin boards.
- Show your family and friends.

Spread the word.

Contact as many rescue agencies as possible. Most agencies will be overloaded, but might allow you to show your pet on one of their adoption days. They might have some other suggestions, or be able to put you in contact with someone who is looking for the kind of pet you are trying to place.

Beautiful girl looking for love



Racine is a 1 year old collie mix with lots of energy and love to give. She is spayed and current on all her shots. She is great with kids, loves to go hiking and swimming – an outdoors girl.

Call Bob and May at 555-7690.

No Bunchers

BREED RESCUE GROUPS



There are many people who are prepared to help place a specific breed of a cat or dog. If you have a Pug or a Persian cat, for example, there could be a rescue group or club that has a list of people looking to adopt that particular breed. Some breed rescue groups might even be willing to

place a mix, as long as it is close to the purebred. Call us for list information of groups in the area.

PREPARE YOUR PET

It is very important to spay or neuter your pet or the stray you are trying to place. Without this procedure, no reputable humane rescue group will help you. Pet overpopulation is an overwhelming problem and we all need to do what we can to prevent more unwanted animals from being born. Call us for information on low cost clinics throughout the area.

Update the vaccinations. Call us for low cost shot information. Prepare a complete medical record.

Prepare a history of your pet. Include as much information as possible about his/her likes and dislikes; current food preferences, relationship to other animals; whether he/she likes to play with certain types of toys. All this information will help make the transition easier on the animal.

Groom and bathe your pet so that he/she looks their best.

If it is relevant, talk to a trainer about your pet's disposition. Often the help of an experienced and caring professional, can help you solve quirky or destructive behavior, making it easier to place the pet in a new home.

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ADVERTISE

Place an advertisement in your local paper, mention in the ad that an adoption fee is required. The bunchers we mentioned earlier gravitate towards ads that offer pets "Free to a good home". Asking for a fee will discourage these people from following up on your advertisement. You can always donate the money to your favorite charity.

Run the ad several times. You are looking to reach a wide audience.

CLASSIFIEDS PETS



Here are some samples of classified ads:

Betty Lou has a new pair of shoes and she is ready to walk right into your heart! Betty is a two year old spayed female terrier mix. She loves to dance, prance and play. She is a doll!! She is good with cats as well. Call Kelly or Doug at 555-3576 after 7PM weekdays or all day Sunday. Adoption fee required.

Betty Davis eyes is only way to describe the magnetism of **Vidalia** – she looks into your eyes with love and kindness. A gentle girl, she is a 6 month old black and white kitten with all her shots. She is spayed and gets on well with other cats. Contact Adoptions at the Chester County, ask for Bill or Mary at 570-555-7890.

'Joe Cocker' is coming to town and wants to sing for you. Joe is a three-year-old neutered male cockapoo with a great personality. Loves kids and dogs, isn't as keen on cats! He has all his shots. Call Morris after 6 PM at 555-4674. Adoption fee required. No bunchers.

Persian cat with attitude. Martha thinks she rules the world! She would prefer a home where she is the only cat. She is gorgeous, and knows it. She loves to sit on laps and be petted. Adoption fee required. See her at the Petco on Broadway, Sat. 10th June from 10AM 'til 4 PM. Ask for Beth.

Shambu is the kind of companion that we all long to have. Loyal, playful, tender and kind best describes this beautiful orange tabby. He is 3-years-old, neutered and has all his shots. He prefers to be in an adult only home. Call Jeremy at 555-2189 before 11AM. Donation for my favorite animal charity required. No Bunchers.

Blondie is the Marilyn Monroe of the Shar Pei set. You understand why gentlemen prefer blonds when you meet Blondie!! She is 2-year-old, spayed female and would like to be the only animal in your household. Come and see her at the PetsMart on Barnes Rd. this Saturday, April 3rd from 10AM-6PM.



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TELEPHONE SCREENING

When someone responds to your flyer or advertisement, you have an opportunity to interview them over the phone before introducing them to the animal. By doing so, you can eliminate unsuitable potential adopters early on. The following are some guidelines for helping you find the best possible new home for your pet or rescued animal.

If the caller is a child, ask to speak to an adult. If they sound young, ask their age. In our experience, teenagers and students do not tend to have stable lives or living situations. If a teenager lives at home, then ask to speak to an adult. You are looking for a permanent new home. Young people tend to move around a lot: college, military, looking for work, etc. It is usually the animals who suffer in these situations. Use the occasion to educate the person. Suggest that they do not get a pet until they can provide a permanent, secure home. Obviously there are al-

ways exceptions to the rule. If you feel the caller can offer a lasting home, despite their age, then take it to the next stage of meeting them and reviewing their living situation.

The following is a list of questions we suggest you ask the prospective adopter. Ask them in a conversational style, rather than as a questionnaire. For example: "This dog/cat is very special to me, and I am looking for just the right home for him/her, would you mind if I ask you a few questions about yourself and your home?"

1) Is the pet for you or someone else?

If the dog or cat is for someone else, then tell them that you need to speak directly to the prospective owner. A gift of a live animal for another person can be a terrible mistake. If the pet is for a child, then tell the person that the dog or cat needs to be seen as a family pet, not exclusively the child's. Parents need to realize that they must be willing to take on the responsibility for the day to day care of the animal for the rest of its life. Children can be involved in the animals care, but often their attention span is sporadic. We have seen many pets turned in to shelters because the children have lost interest.

2) Do you live in a house/mobile home/apartment?

3) Does the situation have a yard (for dogs)?

4) Is the yard completely fenced?

5) Does it have a gate?

6) Will the dog or cat be an indoor or outdoor pet?

From the answers to these questions you can start to build a profile of the person and where they live. The address alone can tell you a lot about the area they live in. If they do not have a fenced yard, then there is a possibility that the dog might end up being chained up outside. We consider this a cruel fate for any dog, and we are sure you will not want yours to end up this way. Will they be willing to walk the dog on a leash regularly? This point also applies to apartment dwellers. Many dogs and all cats do very well in apartments. The proximity encourages close companionship and bonding, whereas a yard can be used to ignore a dog. There are many services that will walk dogs during the day and there is even doggie day care.

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7) Have you had pets before? If so, what has happened to them?

Responses to these questions can be very revealing about the persons level of responsibility. We have found that letting people talk quite a bit in this area elicits the information. You might start by saying "Do you have other pets at home? What do you have?" From these answers you can determine whether the pet you are placing will fit into this household. If you are trying to place a dog who hates cats, and they have cats, this is obviously not a good choice. If they don't have pets now, ask if they have ever had them and where they are now. You might start to see a pattern. If they say "Oh, my last three dogs were run over/poisoned/stolen etc." You are not looking at a responsible home. One negative incident in the past would not immediately rule that person out. Accidents can happen to even the most caring people. On the other hand, they might tell you of the pets they have had until they died of a ripe old age. This will tell you that these people are willing to make the commitment to an animal for its whole life.



8) Do you have children? If so, what are their ages?

Children can be either a blessing or a curse to a pet! Many of the dogs and cats that we take here at the sanctuary have been involved with negative incidents with children. Small children often do not know how to differentiate between a live animal and a stuffed one. And even the most vigilant parent can't be watching the child all the time. We follow the Humane Society guideline of no puppies or kittens to families with children under the age of six. People have a lot of problems with this! However, we have had direct experience with small children being hurt



by puppies or kittens, because they treated them roughly or didn't know when to leave them alone. And then the animal, however reluctantly, is returned or taken to the pound. This will be your own judgment call with the pet you are placing.

An adult cat or dog, that is used to being around small children makes a wonderful family pet. The animal will be too big for the child to hurt, and an adult animal is usually more tolerant of a toddlers inquiring hands pulling at his/her tail or ears. If the animal you are placing has had any kind of biting or nipping incident around children, it would be irresponsible to place that animal in a home with any children. The prospective owner needs to be aware of the history of the animal, as even an adult only home may receive visits from grandchildren or neighbor kids.

The child /animal bond is very special and can be of tremendous value in producing a compassionate, caring person, who will bring those qualities into his/her whole life. So this decision to take on a family pet needs to be made with great care. We see a lot of kids learning that animals are disposable items to be gotten rid of when they become inconvenient, or when the family moves. We would rather they learned that the pet is as valued a member of the family as they are.

We recommend a book called "Child-Proofing your Dog" by trainer, Brian Kilcommons and Sarah Wilson. Published by Warner Books. It is full of good information about children and dogs.

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9) How many hours would the animal be alone during the day?

The number of hours that an animal will be alone during the day needs to be taken into account. Young dogs and cats can get very lonely...and destructive! Dogs are pack animals and need a lot of companionship from either the family or another pet. Many adoptions do not work out for this reason. A lonely bored dog or puppy can chew through the couch, rip up the carpet, destroy the table legs, just for something to do! You get the idea. Prospective adopters need to be aware of this and be encouraged to make



provisions for a young dog or cat while the family is away at work and school. We mentioned dog walking services earlier. Perhaps a neighbor or a local retired person could spend some time with the animal during the day. Locking a dog outside

all day can present an ideal target for thieves, particularly in a big city. An ideal situation is to have a companion animal as a buddy, a doggie door into a dog-proofed area with lots of toys to chew on. Cats do not appear to need the pack in the same way as a dog, but anyone who has owned more than one cat knows what a difference companionship of their own kind makes to a cat.

10) Do you own your own home or are you renting? Does your lease allow pets? May we have your landlord's number?

If a person is renting, you will need to ensure that they have permission in writing to have a pet. Also you will need to determine if there are any size requirements, i.e. under 20 lbs for dogs. Again it is not fair to the pet you are placing to put him/her in a

situation where he/she is at risk. We have known people try to sneak a pet by the landlord, only to be found out. And guess who has to go! So you are back where you started, or the animal ends up at the pound.

11) Are you willing to have me come to your home to see where the animal will be living?

If they are unwilling then it is an automatic no. If they are willing, we strongly recommend you do make the visit, for your own peace of mind. If you are placing a dog who is an escape artist and the person's fence has large holes in it, you know this will not be adequate to keep your guy in. Some discussion about repairs could solve the problem, but make sure they are done before the animal goes to live there. Promises are just that - promises- until the job is done. Seeing the other pets in the household will tell you a lot about the level of care your pet will receive.

12) Would you consider declawing a cat?

Best Friends regards declawing a cat cruel and unnecessary. Most people just need to be informed about correct height of a scratching post (as tall as the cat when fully extended), about clipping the claws regularly and providing lots of toys for play and stimulation.

13) Inside or outside cat?

Cats who go outside live for about two to three years on average. They are vulnerable to traffic accidents, attacks by dogs, accidental or deliberate poisonings. A cat that stays indoors can live up to twenty years. Cats do very well as indoor pets, but some people like to build a cattery attached to the house, or screen in a porch so that their cats can enjoy the open air, and yet remain protected.



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theirs, or you could meet on neutral ground, like a park or a vets office. If the prospective owner has another dog and you are placing a dog, a park setting could be a good place to arrange a meeting.

Hopefully you will be as impressed with the prospective owner in person as you were on the phone. However, if there are some doubts in your mind you could mention that there are other people interested in seeing the pet and that you will get back to them. This can give you the opportunity to make a graceful exit without confrontation.

You will want to observe how they relate to the pet, and how the pet relates to them. This will give you a lot of information. It is fine to be concerned about your pets well-being and any reasonable person understands this. It is better to be safe than sorry. And we advise you do not give up the pet until you have checked the home and living situation.

If you decide to go ahead with the adoption you may want to use a contract like the one included with this booklet. This can be a safety net for both you and the new owner. Make out two copies of the contract and both of you can sign them. Leave one with them and take one with you. Also hand over any medical and vaccination records, and any special food, bowls or bedding.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

After you have asked your questions and received the answers you will have a good idea about the prospective owner and whether you feel he/she will make a good home for the pet you are placing. Of course, it is always possible that the answers you received are not truthful. Some people may answer in the way they think you want to hear rather than how it actually is. You will need to use your instincts. And this is why it is important to meet the people in person and see their home.

MEETING THE PROSPECTIVE OWNER

By the time you reach this stage, you will have found out quite a bit about the prospective owner and his/her suitability as a new home for the pet you are placing. You have some choices about where to introduce the animal to the new person. They could come over to your place, you could take the pet to



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Be sure to ask for a donation and see some form of identification. These will help protect against B dealers and bunchers who commonly use aliases. In order to make a profit, bunchers depend on getting animals for free. This is why it is important to charge a fee. (Generally a minimum of \$45 for a dog and



\$25 for a cat) You may pass this on to your favorite charity.

Placing an animal using these procedures takes time, but your dog or cat has been a good and faithful companion to you. He/she deserves the best new home you can find.

You will sleep better knowing that your pet is happy, healthy and safe in their new home.

Don't give up after just one or two interviews. If you persevere, you are sure to find a new owner eventually. If you are working on a time limit and that time expires with no home in sight, then consider boarding the animal to buy some more time. Some kennels run about \$7 per day.

Once you have made a match, stay in touch. Call regularly to see how things are going, particularly at the outset. Be careful not to bug the new owners, though. There is a time to let go and allow the owners to form their own bond with the animal. If there are any problems with the transition, remember that Best Friends can also help with advice, training and solutions if necessary.

Whatever you do, don't just turn your pet loose in a residential neighborhood, the desert, the woods, or leave him/her tied up to a fence in the hopes that someone will find the pet. A domestic animal cannot fend for itself in a strange environment and some of the saddest sights we see are dogs dashing out to each car that comes along in the hope of its owner's return. These dogs are very hard to catch as they wait for the person who abandoned them as well as being subject to injury, disease, starvation and death. We wish you the best. Best Friends, other animal

groups, and many concerned individuals have used these procedures to re-home thousands of dogs and cats in this area alone. It can be done. It is done every single day. So take heart. With some effort, creativity and perseverance you can do it too.



STRAY ANIMALS – WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FIND ONE

Check for a tag.

If you've found a stray check for a tag! If there is a tag, you may be home free. If the tag has the owner's name on it, call and arrange for a pickup, and know you have done your good deed for the day. If the tag gives the name of a veterinarian's clinic, call during business hours and get the name and phone number of the owner using the code number on the tag and then follow up to return the dog or cat. If there is no tag, put a temporary one on with your name and phone number. You can use a luggage label or even tape the information around the collar with some duct tape. There are different laws in each city relating to stray animals. Check with the Animal Regulation department in your city to see what your legal duties are.

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If you must take the animal to the pound, be sure to claim first and last rights should you wish to continue to relate to the animal. First rights give you an adoption privilege if the animal is not claimed by the owner. Last rights again gives you adoption privileges if the animal is not claimed within a given time period and is due to be euthanized. It is a good idea to call the pound daily to let them know that you are interested in the animals welfare.

Make every effort to find the owner.

- Check lost/found ads in the local newspapers.
- Place lost/found ads in local papers
- Place posters and flyers in the vicinity where the animal was found.

FOUND

White German Shepherd

Found at the corner of
Chester and River road in
Smithville on Friday 12th
March. No collar or tags.

Please call
Annie at 555-3623 after 5pm

A typical ad describes the type of animal, where he/she was found, coloring and other distinct characteristics. You want to leave out some characteristics about the animal, so that when a person calls claiming to be the owner, you can verify that the animal is really theirs. For example, you could leave out information about the gender of the animal, or that he/she has white feet, or a really short or bushy tail.

Don't forget your phone number and times you can be reached.



Beware of dishonest callers.

When someone answers your ad, make sure they give you a detailed description of the animal. To ensure you have found the animal's real owner here are a few tips.

- Ask the caller to bring a photo of the animal to the meeting place.
- Ask for their veterinarians phone number, and make a follow up call.
- See how the animal reacts to the caller in person. If you are not satisfied, ask for more proof of ownership.
- Remember to get the owners phone number and address.

We referred to bunchers earlier, who sell animals to B dealers who turn around and sell them to laboratories for use in research. Claiming a stray as their own can be another way these people can put money in their pockets with a resale. It makes sense to be vigilant.

ADOPTION CONTRACT

Name of Adoptee _____ Date _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Pet Name _____ Sex _____ Age _____ S/N _____

Color and description _____

Name of Adopter _____

Address _____

AS THE ADOPTING PARTY I AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING PROVISIONS:

1) If the pet is not already altered I agree to have the pet altered by _____

2) I agree to keep an identification tag attached to a properly fitted collar which will remain on the adopted animal at all times, whether inside or outside of the house, and to obtain all of the necessary city licenses required by local authorities.

3) I agree to provide the adopted pet with necessary inoculations at the intervals advised by my veterinarian.

4) I agree to have the adopted pet under my control when it is not on the confines of my property. A secured fenced area will be provided for dogs, including shelter from the elements. If the adopted pet is a cat, I agree to keep the cat as an indoor only pet. The adopted pet will not be tied or chained.

5) If for any reason I cannot keep the adopted pet, I agree to notify the Adoptee (name and address above), of the availability of the pet and to return the adopted pet upon request.

6) I agree not to abuse or neglect the adopted pet and I authorize the Adoptee, at his/her sole discretion, to determine whether or not the pet has been abused or neglected.

7) I understand that any failure to perform the foregoing agreement will constitute a breach of contract. In the event of any such breach of contract, I authorize the Adoptee to reclaim both possession and ownership of the Adopted pet.

8) I understand that the pet covered by these adoption papers, is as far as can be determined by the Adoptee, in good health and that the Adoptee is not responsible for any medical fees incurred after the adoption date. However, if a health problem develops during the first 10 days, I should notify the Adoptee to discuss the matter.

9) I agree to give the Adoptee visitation rights to ensure that the terms of this adoption agreement are being observed.

ADOPTEE _____

ADOPTER _____ DATE _____