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## GUIDELINES FOR PLACING YOUR PET OR A STRAY ANIMAL IN A NEW HOME

### HOW SHOULD YOU ATTEMPT TO PLACE AN ANIMAL?

#### With Care!

Not all people like animals, or are kind to them. There are many unpleasant uses to which animals are put including:

- Used as "bait" to train fighting dogs to kill
- Used as food for snakes or people
- Sold to labs for experimentation
- Sacrificed or tortured for occult purposes
- Abandoned on the street or in the country where they die of disease, starvation, predators or gunshot wounds from those who shoot animals for sport
- Maimed or killed by cars
- Irresponsibly dumped at the local kill-shelter to be euthanized



The only way to protect your animal from such an end is to ensure his/her future by finding and carefully screening a good home for your animal. The decisions

you make on the animal's behalf will not only determine if they will have a happy home, but will also determine whether the animal will live or die. One can always find someone willing to take an animal, but finding a good home is a great deal harder. There are individuals who pretend to seek a companion animal only to acquire them for research or other cruel purposes. Always carefully screen a new home and its occupants. **Don't think it can't happen to you.** Always ask for identification and references. Ask where they work. Legitimate callers will not mind when you explain why you need the information. Don't be afraid to ask questions, to make stipulations, or just to say "no." This brochure is designed as a tool to help you learn how to go about placing your animal, how to evaluate a potential home, and how to make the best possible choice for your animal. The future of this small life begins or ends with you. Please be wise in your choices.

### YOUR CHOICES

Although we do not support breeding animals when millions die each year in shelters, if your companion animal is a pure breed dog or cat, contact the original breeder of the animal. Many breeders will take back the animal or assist you in placing him/her. Many breeders have people waiting to adopt pure breed animals.

If your animal is not a pure breed, if you do not know the breeder, or if you feel the breeder is not the best choice for the animals' welfare, then you can attempt to put the animal up for adoption yourself.

If you are not able to put the animal up for adoption yourself, please do not take the animal to the local kill-shelter to be euthanized or drop the animal off on the street or in the wilderness. Please call one of the many rescue groups to help you. They may be able to make referrals to help you place your animal. A veterinarian may also be able to help or may give you phone numbers of others who can help.

### MAKING YOUR PET ADOPTABLE

*Take your animal to a veterinarian for a complete check up.* A thoroughly vetted animal is a much more attractive adoption prospect.

Tell your vet about any behavior problems the animal may have so that physical causes can be ruled out. Some behavior problems are caused by easily treatable health problems. For example, house soiling can be caused by

worms, diabetes, or urinary tract problems, to name a few.

(NOTE: If you are helping a stray, tell your vet what you are trying to do and they may give you a discount for services.)

- Bring all vaccinations up to date. Have cats tested for FELV & FIV. Have dogs tested for heartworms and start him/her on heartworm preventative if he/she is not already on a preventative medicine. Make sure that you get a rabies license tag when your animal is vaccinated for rabies.
- Have a stool-sample checked for worms or other parasites and check for other internal parasites and treat external parasites, like ear mites, ticks and fleas to name a few.
- ***If your dog or cat is not spayed or neutered, DO IT NOW!!*** It is much easier to adopt out a spayed/neutered pet. There are major health benefits to spaying/neutering for the animal as well as for society in general. Spaying/neutering can decrease the risk of breast & ovarian cancer in females and prostate and testicular problems in males. (NOTE: If money is a problem, talk to your vet, local animal rescue volunteer, or ask at your local animal shelter for low cost spay/neuter programs or certificates.)
- Your pet should never have fleas because you are a responsible pet owner and give your pet monthly flea preventative! Can you imagine the itching and suffering he/she would be going through if you hadn't? But, if your pet does have fleas, you need to correct this issue prior to adopting out your pet. Just a flea bath won't do it and that's a temporary fix. You need to give him/her a flea bath and then apply a 30 day topical flea "preventative" such as Frontline or Advantax. These will also kill the eggs that the flea shampoo didn't. Be careful to only use the products designed for your type of pet (dog or cat) because the medications are made with different concentrations.

**Groom your pet:** No one will want to adopt a companion animal that is smelly, and unkempt. (NOTE: All of this can be done by a groomer.)

Get rid of mats and tangles by brushing thoroughly. You can try a brush mitt to protect your hand if the animal may scratch or bite while grooming.

Give your animal a bath. Even cats need baths sometimes to get them clean. Make sure the water is

lukewarm and the air is warm when they get out of the water. Dry them thoroughly with a towel so they do not chill.

Use a vet recommended shampoo or a mild shampoo. It is not necessary to use a flea shampoo if your pet is on the monthly Advantage or other flea control program.

Read labels carefully especially when bathing kittens or puppies. *A professional groomer can safely give your animal a bath if you do not feel comfortable doing it Yourself*

Get the animal a new collar and leash to go with his new clean image. Make sure the collar is the right size. The safest collars for cat are the new breakaway collars. Having a pet that's neatly groomed complete with collar and leash makes a nice impression on prospective adopters.

**Correct any behavior problems the animal may have:**

You can not expect a new owner to accept an adult animal that is not housebroken or trained. Be honest with someone inquiring about your animal. If you are trying to place an animal because of behavioral problems, do not expect the new owners to want to keep the pet anymore than you did. If you place an animal with behavioral problems in a home, they may try to return the animal or get rid of it. The new owners may not be as careful as you about how they get rid of the animal if they decide not to keep it. If your animal has behavioral problems that make it unadoptable you have two choices:

- Keep the animal until you have corrected the problem and then adopt it out. Obtain professional help, if necessary. For information, contact your vet, local rescue groups, local obedience classes, private trainers and behaviorists.
- Keep the animal permanently. No one will take better care of the animal than you can if you are concerned enough to want the best for the animal.

**PLACING AN AD IN THE  
NEWSPAPER**

The trick to an effective ad is creating one that will generate inquiries (while not misrepresenting the animal) and, at the same time, do some preliminary screening for you. You need a concise description of

the animal his/her needs, your requirements and your telephone number. Include the following information:

- Breed
  - Pet Characteristics
  - Color
  - Your Requirements for a Home
  - Sex
  - Your First Name
  - Neutered or Spayed
  - Your Telephone Number
  - Approximate Age
- 
- If your pet is 0 - 1 1/2yrs, then give the age in months if known, ex. 18 mths is 1 1/2 yrs. He/she will be perceived as a young animal. If 1 1/2 - 3yrs, then describe him/her as a young adult. If he/she is over 3yrs then describe as an adult.
  - Emphasize your animals "selling points". Keep physical descriptions brief and concentrate on personality traits and other advantages. Is he/she friendly, housebroken, obedience trained, loves kids and other animals? Tell the good points of your animal, but do not exaggerate.
  - Target the type of home you want your pet adopted into. Pre-qualify the home by stating definite requirements in a positive manner. For example: No dogs or No cats. Fine with children over 10. Quiet, mature family pet. Ideal for senior. Always state "references required". This lets people know that you are a concerned pet owner who wants to do right by his/her animal and that they can expect a barrage of questions when they call.
  - NEVER, include the phrase "free to good home," even if it is true. In fact, do not put any price at all. While it is true that "free" will generate a lot of calls, the quality of the callers is generally poor. Not stating a price gives you a lot of latitude. You can easily tell the wrong caller that the animal is \$5,000 dollars and just as easily give the dog "free" to the perfect family on a fixed income, if you want to.
  - We recommend asking for a minimal adoption fee to help cover the expenses you have incurred for advertising, vet care and to give you an indication of the type of home you have found. Someone not willing to pay a small amount for a fully vetted, cared for animal may also cut corners financially in the future with regard to veterinary care or nutrition.
  - Include your telephone number. Instruct the newspaper with whom you are placing the ad to

abbreviate as much as possible. Your ad should read something like this: British Silver Tabby/Abysinian mix for adoption. Young adult spayed female. Friendly, housebroken, great for a one cat home. Indoor only, ref. required. Peg (Phone #).

## OTHER ADVERTISING

### Flyers

Develop a flyer containing a picture of the animal (action shots are more interesting) and more detailed information. Copy these and post them at work and in veterinarian's offices, groomers, pet supply stores, supermarkets, obedience training classes, and community bulletin boards. Follow up with phone calls and personal visits. Bring your animal, when possible and reasonable.

**Word of mouth** Inform all your friends, co-workers, relatives, front desk staff of veterinarian's offices about the animals availability. Give everyone a flyer.

**Free publications** Research which local publications will permit free advertising. Sometimes the small towns surrounding big cities will print these type of ads free in their newspaper. This gives you the advantage of possibly finding a home with some land for outdoor running room for the animal.

**Phone referral - rescue groups** List the animal as available with your local breed rescue and all animal rescue groups to obtain phone call referrals from them.

## SCREENING APPLICANTS

### Questions for the adopter

Talking to prospective adopters can be frustrating and time consuming. Refer to the following for examples of questions you might want to ask callers. Make a questionnaire sheet, make copies and fill in the information as you speak to each prospect. People usually find it easy to talk about animals and this information usually helps you pick out the right family/home.

- ***Get the first and last name and number of the caller first*** in case you are accidentally disconnected.
- ***Ask who else lives in the home?*** Are there children? What are their ages? If the animal is not good with children, be up front with the caller and do not waste time. A young dog under 2 years, for example, is

almost always a bad choice for a family with young children as the dog is not mature enough to understand how to play non violently with kids. Children often engage in "rough-play" that may frighten the animal or represent aggressive behavior to the animal. A small puppy or kitten can also be hurt by a young child. Does everyone in the home like and want the animal? If the person's partner is dead set against it, then the animal will be resented and possibly abused by that person. What would happen to the animal if the only person in the home who cares for it should die? You could not be sure the animal would have a good future.

- **Find out if they currently have other pets inside or outside the home.** If your animal is not good with other animals or if your animal does not get along with another animal of the same-breed and sex, do not waste their time and yours. Decline the home. Neutering will not change aggressive tendencies so do not think that two males will get along just because they are neutered. Remember, you want this to be a permanent home where your pet will be happy, so do not let your desire to place the animal cloud your good judgment.
- **Ask why they want this animal.** Look for someone who wants a household companion. Be aware of people seeking an animal for guarding or breeding purposes. Guard dogs are often discarded when their usefulness is over, and the last thing you want is to contribute to the animal overpopulation problem by allowing your animal to be bred. Also be aware of people who pose as a good person with a good home for the animal but really want to obtain the animal for research purposes. Call your references! If someone wants the pet as a gift for another person, insist that the person who will be spending the next decade with the animal be involved in the selection. This **also gives you an** opportunity to evaluate that person as a good owner as well.
- **If the family or person has no pets currently, find out if they have had any pets in the past and what happened to them.** The answer will give you an indication of the type of future your animal will face. People who have never had an animal before should be advised of the considerable expense of taking good care of an animal. They should also be made aware of the responsibility involved in caring for another life who cannot care for itself. Talk about what average feed bills and vet bills can run. Think to yourself, can this person handle being a committed, caring pet owner? If in your heart the answer is no, then do not place your animal in that home. Are they prepared to educate or reeducate an animal that has behavioral problems? If they have had a pet in the last year, get the name of the animal and the

vet they used. *Call for a reference.* Did they take the animal for yearly check-ups? Stay away from anyone who has had a significant number of pets in a short period of time. It will be unlikely that your pet would last there very long either. Someone who has several animals who were either stolen, killed by cars, lost or given away are undoubtedly a poor prospect.

- **Does the person own the home they live in? Are they renting?** If so does their lease allow for pets? Get the name of the landlord or condo association and make sure that an animal is allowed. Make sure they know what pet fees will be involved if any are required. Some places charge a base fee then add a monthly fee to the rent. Make sure the adopter knows what rules their landlord uses.
- **Do they have the necessary room for a pet?** Is their yard fenced with room enough for the dog to run? How tall is the fence? What kind of fence is it? People who do not have an enclosed fence may allow the dog to run loose in the neighborhood, which is mostly illegal and dangerous, or they may chain the animal which is a frustrating and desolate existence for an animal. Tell them you will want to come and see the location where the pet will be kept. Get their address and check it out. Make sure the address exists and that the neighborhood is suitable.
- **Ask them where they will keep the animal.** Be wary of people who say they will keep it in the garage, on the back porch, outside only or in the basement. They are probably not interested in making the animal a household companion. Domestic cats and dogs have been selectively bred and engineered over the centuries to want and need human companionship and interaction. Unless the family or person spends 10 hours a day in the garage or outside, an intention to keep the animal only in these places or only outside is an indication that the animal will be isolated and alone for most of its lifetime.
- **How much time do they have to spend with the animal?** People in situations where the animal will be unsupervised for more than a few hours a day should not adopt a young animal (one under several months of age). This animal may develop behavior problems that arise from boredom and lack of timely discipline. People with young children are unlikely to have time to spend with an animal. Many parents seek a pet thinking that the pet and the children will entertain each other. They find that young children quickly lose interest in the pet. Pets have a great need for the mature interaction that only adults can give it and the pet not only does not

make less work for them by keeping their children entertained, but actually creates more work for them.

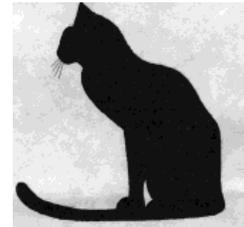
- **Who will primarily be responsible for the animal?** Will the adult in the family be responsible for the daily care of the pet? It's O.K. for the children to participate in the care of the pet, but the ultimate responsibility should rest with the adult!
- **If the person or family travels a lot, what will happen to the animal?** Caring for an animal is a 10-15 year commitment. Remind prospects that they may have to board animals during vacations or hire a pet sitter. They must also plan for the pet's needs if contemplating a move.
- **How will they discipline the animal if he/she misbehaves?** How have they disciplined animals in the past? What restrictions will the animal have in the home? Is there anywhere the animal will not be allowed to go and why? What do they plan to feed the animal and where? Make sure that food is not located too close to litterboxes or cleaning supplies. *Get two personal references.* Even someone who does not now nor has ever owned a pet should know two people who can vouch for what kind of human being they are. *Require a home visit/interview!* Get a good look and feel for where your animal will be spending the rest of its life.

### ASK FOR THEIR VETERINARIAN INFORMATION

- When you contact their vet, explain that John/Jane Doe have asked to adopt your animal and you want to make sure that the animal will get a good home. Most vets would be happy to cooperate.
- Ask whether their pets get/got regular vaccinations and annual stool checks and year round heartworm preventative for dogs.
- Were the pets spayed/neutered? If the answers are positive, you can be sure the same will be probable for your pet.

### QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFERENCES

- How long have they known John/Jane Doe?
- Do they have any pets now?
- Did they have any pets in the past that you know of?
- Are their pets well cared for?
- Is their yard fenced in? (This will tell you just how well they know each other.) If you get a different answer than what you expect you may have to do some further investigating.
- If they were placing one of their pets for adoption, would they give it to John/Jane Doe?



### OBSERVE THE APPLICANT WITH THE ANIMAL IN YOUR HOME FIRST

If the preliminary screening and reference calls are positive, call the family and make an appointment for them to see your animal. Make sure they know that they will not be going home with the animal and that you will not make a final decision until all applicants have been screened. The animal will be friendliest to strangers in a familiar environment, so it's best for the first visit to occur in your home. Encourage them to come when all those who live in the home can be present. This is a family/household decision, and it also gives you a chance to meet all the people your pet will be exposed to in the home. It also gives you a chance to find out if getting the animal is a unanimous decision.

At the interview, watch how they act with the animal. Do they approach the animal in an experienced way? Are they sensitive to the animal's reaction to them and the animal's need to feel safe? Do they supervise children and teach them to be gentle and patient. Do the kids seem to respect the pet?

## VISIT THE APPLICANT'S HOME

If you and your animal like the applicant and the applicant likes you and your animal, then set up a time that you can visit their home without the pet to do an initial home screening. Don't go alone. Those predators you are trying to avoid become more nervous in groups of 2 or more. Never let an applicant take a pet to their home without first visiting their home! This is the only way that you can truly verify who they are. If it appears that something does not feel right about their home situation or if the home does not look like a good place for your animal, you are not locked into a promise to give them an animal. Let them know that a home visit is a part of the screening process and that you will not allow your animal to be adopted without a home visit.

When you go on your visit, show up 30-60 minutes early. This gives you a chance to see what the home looks like before they fix it up for you. Insist in seeing all the places in the whole house and property where the animal will be allowed to go.

## PLACING THE ANIMAL IN IT'S NEW HOME

***Placing an animal in a home with no other pets-*** If you approve of the family and the future home of your animal, then go ahead and deliver the animal to them. However, you need to remind them of the following recessive behaviors that the anxiety of going to a new home may cause.

*An animal that was previously housebroken may have an accident or two within the first few days.* The animal probably does not know where his/her bathroom is because his/her scent is no longer there. Try one of the following methods. Confine the animal to a small space such as a crate or a small area like a bathroom to re-housebreak the animal. An animal in a small space with food, water and a waste area, will use the waste area so it can keep its other areas clean. As the animal uses the correct area for waste continuously, introduce the animal to more and more space until the animal can roam the whole house without soiling the wrong area. Be sure to remove the odor of accident areas completely and cover the area temporarily so the animal can not get to the area. If the animal smells the waste there, it may use that area again thinking that it is an acceptable site. Another method to try is to take feces/urine from the unacceptable site and put it at the acceptable site so that the animal knows where the

acceptable site is. Again, completely remove the odor from the previous site. Do not try to force the animal or be harsh with the animal. This will make the animal scared and will make things worse.

The average animal takes several days to settle in. Some animals may take longer. Suggest that the new owners keep the same feeding and exercise schedule for the first few days to weeks so the pet can adjust. Also it helps if the animal has something of its own from the previous house to feel secure. For example, its own toys or bed. Do not force the new animal into a bath or grooming or training until the animal is fully adjusted to the new home.

***Placing the animal in a home with other pets-*** If the adopting family has a dog and you are placing a dog, you will want the dogs to meet on neutral ground like a park. Dogs are very territorial and most dogs will resent a stranger on their territory. A dog's first impression of another dog is hard to change. Your best chance of a successful relationship is always on neutral ground.

***When placing a new cat in a home where cats already live, go slow! We know you want your new cat to become best friends with the cat already in your household. But please follow these guidelines to successfully make your cats befriend one another in a matter of time.*** We recommend keeping the cats in separate rooms for up to two weeks. After two weeks, switch the cats, but leave their toys and litter boxes as they are and let them become used to each other's smells for a few days. Then slowly introduce them. Do not force them to get near each other. Keep a water gun handy to separate them if there is fighting. They may take days to weeks to sort out the pecking order, especially if there are two males. Expect a cat who has previously behaved very well to exhibit some bad behavior due to jealousy of the intruder. They may try to punish you or turn destructive and start chewing or clawing.

If the adopting animal is a different species (i.e., dog and cat), it will help if you only adopt an animal who is younger than it. Adult animals will usually accept a baby animal and take over the chores of washing training and discipline. If you try to intervene and stop your pet from disciplining the newcomer, he/she might become resentful. It also might be a good idea for someone else to bring the new animal into the home if your animal is possessive of you so that your animal will not be upset or resent you for abandoning him/her. Do not allow the newcomer to usurp anything or place that belonged to the original animal. Remember to

spend equal time with both animals to decrease the chance of regressive behavior due to jealousy. Cats and dogs usually can work out their differences on their own. The only thing to worry about is the dangers of a size difference as a large dog can accidentally hurt a small kitten in play.

## **FOLLOWING UP ON YOUR ANIMAL'S ADOPTION**

Make sure the new owner's understand the nature of the commitment they are making to your animal. Tell the new owner's that you will want to keep in touch and visit a few times to make sure everything is going okay. Tell them to call if there are any problems or questions. Emphasize that the animal is to be returned to you if it does not work out.

Provide the new owners with a list of medications and a feeding schedule. Include some of his food in the adoption package. Write down the animals' normal schedule and activities.

Send a favorite toy or blanket with the animal to make them feel more secure in their new surroundings. Provide the new owners with the animals' rabies/ID tag. Advise the new owner not to leave the new animal unattended for a while as a sense of belonging takes time to develop. Give the new family copies of all vet records, vaccinations, certificates or pedigrees. Wait until the trial period is over before you transfer AKC registration or pedigrees. List the names and numbers



of training classes and local breed rescue groups and encourage the new owners to call for advice.

Have the family sign an informal adoption agreement which includes a waiver of liability. (This protects you if the dog or cat destroys property or injures someone during the adjustment period.) Also, the adopter must agree to return the animal to you if they decide they cannot keep him/her. Ask for a small fee to cover expenses that you have incurred if you rescued the animal.

Most of all, feel confident that you have placed your animal in the best possible home. By following these guidelines, you can be assured that your animal will be happy with his/her new family and the family will cherish their new member for a lifetime.

### Notes and Comments about potential adopters: