



Rally to Rescue



Rescue Tips



Finding the Right Home

Ofentimes rescued animals have a rocky start in life. To help prevent risk of placing a dog or cat in an inappropriate home, many rescue organizations take steps to screen potential adopters. Their practices include home visits, interviewing references, and even establishing an adoption committee to decide whether a home is right for a pet.

Conducting Home Visits

Angie Monteleon, president of Aztec Doberman Pincher Club of San Diego and director of the group's rescue program, takes many steps to ensure that the organization's rescued Dobermans go to good homes. A potential adopter first goes to the organization's Web site to view photographs and profiles of dogs available for adoption, and then they contact Monteleon.

After interviewing the caller, Monteleon has the entire family, including any dogs they already own, come to her home. She meets the family to get an impression of how they interact with the Doberman they want to adopt. If the meeting goes well, she sets up an appointment to take the dog to their home.

The home visit allows her to "look for things such as secure fencing, possibilities for someone to leave a gate open, and hazardous items in the yard, such as boards with nails, small toys that could be swallowed, and poisonous plants," Monteleon says. "I look for whether they are near a busy street or freeway. Basically, I screen for anything that could be potentially hazardous to the pet. I also want to see how our Doberman interacts at the home with other pets and with the children and parents. If everything works out, they sign the adoption papers."

Mike Jacopelli of Hawkeye and Friends Animal Rescue in Sterling Heights, Mich.,

feels that home visits are one of the most important steps in the adoption process. He personally takes all dogs being adopted to their potential new home. "I want to see where the pets are going to live and make sure it's a clean and safe environment," Jacopelli says. "Many of my dogs have come from bad situations, which have included harsh and inadequate living conditions for the dogs."

Doing home visits helps to prevent the risk of dogs going back to bad homes. "One of the most surprising things I've learned in the eight-plus years I've done rescue is that some people will not be totally truthful," he says. "When filling out the adoption application some people may not tell you the whole truth or just outright lie."

Foster Families

The Eskie Rescuers United American Eskimo Dog Rescue in Simpsonville, S.C., not only conducts home visits for potential adopters, they also visit the homes of potential foster families. Since the organization largely relies on the Internet to advertise dogs available for adoption and to accept adoption applications, Eskie Rescuers United wants to make sure that both foster families and adoption families really want to take care of rescued American Eskimo Dogs.

"Most people send us an e-mail saying they want to adopt a pet," says Leah Lichtenberg, co-founder and executive director of operations. "We then direct them to the online adoption process. We

also require three references: one veterinary reference and two personal references."

The veterinary reference helps to ensure that any pets in the home are current on vaccinations and preventive medications for heartworms, fleas and ticks, and are spayed or neutered. Until all the requirements are met, Eskie Rescuers United will not make an adoption.

"We make sure all our pets meet the

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Gina Donnelly of Carlisle, Pa., a foster parent with Eskie Rescuers United American Eskimo Dog Rescue, sits with some of the dogs currently available for adoption. Clockwise from top right are "Camper," "Mozart," "Anastasia," and "Aladdin." For information, visit www.eskierescuersunited.org.

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same requirements before they are placed in a new home, so we want to also make sure that potential adopters treat their other pets the way we treat our rescued pets," Lichtenberg says.

Getting Veterinary References

Coastal Pet Rescue in Savannah, Ga., also requires a veterinary reference for potential adopters. "We make sure that we adopt animals to adults who are responsible and can provide proper care for the animal," says Lisa Scarborough, president and founder. "We have a very extensive home visit form that our volunteers take with them to a home visit to make sure that potential adopters meet all of our requirements."

The form includes information about the neighborhood, traffic conditions, family, home, and backyard. Interviewers also note the individual family members and other pets in the home. Coastal Pet Rescue conducts home visits for both cats and dogs.

An Adoption Committee

Love a Golden Rescue in St. Louis not only relies on a home visit to ensure a qualified adopter adopts their dogs, they also rely on the expertise of an adoption committee. A three-person committee reviews the adoption application and home visit report, and then decides whether a potential adopter is suitable. The committee includes the organization's intake coordinator, adoption coordinator and the foster family of the Golden in

which the family is interested.

"Because of the size and activity level of Golden Retrievers, we prefer homes without children under 4 and those with a fence," says Joe Stortz. "Sometimes the adoption committee approves an adoption based on certain contingencies, such as pending installation of a fence, or if the neighborhood doesn't allow fences, then pending installation of an invisible fence."

A Good Outcome

Though there's no guarantee that a new home will work out for a rescued animal, most rescue organizations think it's important to screen adopters through interviews and home visits. A perfect home for one pet may not be perfect for another. Taking time to check out potential new owners, their home and neighborhood may save everyone heartache in the long run. ♦



Coastal Pet Rescue foster parent Mandy Ownley of Savannah, Ga., poses with one of three kittens soon to be available for adoption. For information about cats and dogs available for adoption, visit www.coastalpetrescue.org.