

Tips for Finding Homes for Pets in Need

We do not recommend surrendering animals to a shelter where they may be euthanized.

Finding a New Home for your Own Pet

Consider Using the Services of BrightHaven's Animal Network (BAN)

- BrightHaven Animal Rescue Network (BARN)
- BrightHaven's Animal Network Application Form

Prepare the pet for adoption.

See that the pet is;

- Spayed or neutered (not important for an elderly animal!)
- In good health and has been checked out by a veterinarian Prepare your pets medical records with as much history as possible.
- Clean and well-groomed (especially before you take a photo)
- House-trained and reasonably well-behaved (Ask your local shelters whether they offer low-cost spay/neuter clinics, obedience training classes, and bulletin boards for posting information about animals available for adoption.)

Advertise widely

Here are some tips:

- Include photos and descriptions that help people make a connection to the pet.
- Describe the pet's personality, habits, and things that make him or her special.
- Include any disabilities, health issues or behavior quirks.
- Contact as many shelter and rescue groups as you can, including breed rescue groups if you are trying to place a specific breed.
- Even if they cannot take the animal in, they may be able to provide some useful leads to someone who can and they may be able to suggest additional resources to help you. Place a classified ad in your local newspaper.
- Use flyers, which are inexpensive to produce and often highly effective, especially for older animals or pets with special needs.
- Be sure the flyer includes a GOOD photo and a GOOD story.
- Post flyers throughout your community in places frequented by potential adopters (e.g., health food stores, supermarkets, libraries, churches, health clubs, workplace bulletin boards, and sporting goods stores.)

- Post the description and photo of the pet on adoption websites, including shelter websites, specialized rescue groups (e.g., FIV+ cats, disabled pets, senior dogs, rabbits, breed rescue groups etc.), and general pet adoption websites.

Use word of mouth and community contacts.

- Enlist friends, co-workers and family members to help with spreading the word.
- Ask people to mention the animal in their church's newsletter, send an e-mail about the pet through their office memo system, or share some flyers with the members of their social clubs.

Take the pet out and about so others will get to know him or her!

- (This works especially well with dogs, but even cats and many rabbits can benefit from being seen in public.) Adorn the pet with a colorful bandana or an "Adopt Me" sign and take him on walks, to pet supply stores, to the local park. Just be sure the pet will be safe in these places.
- Ask your local shelter to see if they have off-site adoption days where you can bring the pet.

Be creative, positive and persistent

Remember that you are this pet's best option for finding a new home because;

1. You personally know this pet and care about his/her fate.
2. Your pet is living in a relatively stress-free environment where he or she is less subject to anxiety, aggression and illness.

Finding a New Home for a Stray Pet

1. **Check for a tag or microchip.** If you find a tag, contact the owner or veterinarian listed. If you do not find a tag, take the animal to a vet or shelter that can detect and read microchips. If you find no tag or microchip, put on a temporary tag with your name and phone number.
2. **Notify your local shelter.** In some communities, the law requires such notification. Notifying the shelter can help reunite pets with owners who might be searching for them.
3. **Try to find the owner.** Check local paper for "Lost pet" ads. Post a "Found pet" ad yourself. Post flyers near where you found the animal, but omit some crucial characteristic so you can ensure the animal goes to his rightful owner.
4. **Watch out for dishonest callers.** Require a detailed description, including the information you omitted in your flyer. Ask for photo ID when you meet, and be sure to get the owner's phone number and address. Ask for the owner's veterinarian's phone number and make a follow-up call. Observe how the animal reacts to the caller if you meet in person. Require further proof of ownership if you are not satisfied.
5. **If you cannot locate the owner...** Treat the pet as if it were your own. Please see "If this is your pet..." above.

Screening Potential Adopters

If someone responds to your publicity, you'll want to conduct a phone interview first, in order to eliminate unsuitable adopters early on. Try to speak with a responsible adult (rather than a child) and look for someone who will not be moving anytime soon (this typically excludes people going to college, entering the military, or looking for work).

Make your tone conversational so the adopter does not feel threatened, but do take careful notes. Be sure to tell the adopter how special this pet is to you, and explain that this is why you are asking questions, such as these:

1. Is this pet for you or for someone else? If it is for someone else, ask to speak with that person. If it is for a child, be sure the child's parents or guardians know they—and not the child—must be responsible for daily care. Shelters are full of pets whose “children” tired of taking care of them.
2. Please tell me about any other pets you have at home. You want the pet you are placing to be a good fit for the home and for other pets the family might have already. If the adopter does not have other pets, ask whether they have had pets before and, if so, what happened to them. The answers can reveal much about the person's feelings of responsibility toward a pet. But do understand that accidents can happen. If the person had many pets, look for pets that lived to a ripe old age, a sure sign the person makes a lifetime commitment to his or her pets.
3. Do you have children? If so, what are their ages? You want to be sure to place the pet in a home where both pet and child will be safe and happy.
4. Also, be sure the pet will not be too great of a burden on the family from a financial, emotional, or time point of view. Be sure the adopter has considered ongoing food, housing, and veterinary care.
5. Do you live in a house, mobile home, or an apartment? Be sure the pets and people will have enough space to live comfortably. If you rent, does your lease allow pets? May I have your landlord's number? You will need written permission for renters to have pets and should be aware of any size restrictions for pets. If you do not verify this ahead of time, the pet may end up at risk again if the landlord finds out about a disallowed pet.
6. May I do a home visit to see the pet's new digs? If the adopter refuses, cross him or her off the list. Seeing other pets (and even other family members) will give.
7. Request an idea of the type of care your pet will receive. This also will give you a chance to ask the adopter to correct situations—such as a fence with large holes—that could pose a problem for the pet.
8. How many hours will the pet be alone during the day? Some animals, such as rabbits, can be left alone during the day. Others, such as dogs or very young animals, cannot be left alone due to health reasons or because they could become bored and destructive. If the pet will be alone, consider suggesting a buddy for him or her, and be sure plenty of toys and a safe play area will be available.
9. Special considerations for dogs: Will an outdoor dog have a completely fenced yard? Will the dog be chained up outside (of course, you don't want this cruel situation to occur)?
10. Will the dog get regular exercise?
11. Special considerations for cats and rabbits: will the cat or rabbit be an indoor pet (indoor homes are best for the animal's health and longevity)?

12. Would you consider declawing your cat (most people consider this to be a cruel and unnecessary procedure)?

Meeting a Potential Adopter

If the potential adopter passes muster over the phone, the next step is a personal “meet and greet” in the adopter’s home, in a neutral place such as a vet’s office or perhaps at a park if you are introducing more than one dog. If this pet is to be a companion for another pet, be sure the pets will get along with one another. Before adopting your pet, do try to visit the adopter’s home. If you have any doubts, discuss them with the adopter, or exit gracefully by saying other people are interested in the pet and you will get back to them.

Finalizing the Adoption

If you decide that your pet and the potential adopter are made for each other, consider using an adoption contract as a safety net for yourself and the adopter. Make two copies of the contract, and have each copy signed, keeping one and giving the other to the adopter. Collect any adoption fee, and hand over medical and vaccination records, food, bowls, toys, or bedding. And do stay in touch after the adoption, without hovering too much.

Note: Many of these tips come from a downloadable publication entitled “How to Find Homes for Homeless Pets (PDF)” by Best Friends Animal Society (bestfriends.org).

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