

Finding a Good Home



Finding a good home for an animal takes time and effort, but doing so will provide you the satisfaction of knowing it will enjoy a lifetime of happiness and well-being. Concerned Citizens for Animals (CCA) has had many years of experience in placing animals. CCA provides this information to assist you in this important endeavor. Remember, this animal's safety and welfare are in your hands.



Considering the Animal's Needs

It's important you consider the animal's needs. If you are placing a large active dog, an apartment home may not be suitable. Perhaps the animal doesn't like other animals, has never been around other animals, or isn't well adjusted to children. These are important things to consider if you want to make a match that will result in a permanent home.

If you know of any behavioral or medical issues, be up front with anyone seeking to adopt this animal. Is the animal on regular medication for an illness or condition? Is the animal fearful of loud noises (e.g. fireworks, thunder, etc.)? You need to be honest with potential owners if you want the adoption to work. If the dog you are placing suffers from separation anxiety, it is best you seek a home with a new owner who is in a position to provide a stay-at-home environment (e.g. retired, works from home, etc.)



Placing an Ad

Many individuals will place a classified advertisement in their local newspapers or post notices on internet sites or social media. In many cases, these animals are advertised as "free to a good home." As the pet's owner or animal's sponsor, it is your responsibility to ensure the home is indeed a good one.

In any posting or ad you place, state **VET REFERENCE REQUIRED**. This will screen out some, but unfortunately not all, respondents who have no business owning a pet. By requiring a vet reference, it is clear the home you are seeking must be with someone who has a proven commitment to past and current pets.



Screening Callers

When receiving calls in response to your ad, it is important you screen prospective owners carefully. Most people will assume because an animal is free, it is a first-come-first-serve proposition. Make it clear from the start that this is not so. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Don't let anyone intimidate you or put you on the defensive. Be pleasant, polite and **FIRM**. Remember, how you ask a question is as important as the question itself. Do not phrase questions in a way that tells callers what you want to hear.

Beware of anyone who says he/she will take an entire litter of kittens or puppies. It is unlikely this individual has the animals' best interests at heart. These puppies/kittens may find themselves used to train fighting dogs, sacrificed, abused, or used as backyard breeders. **Yes**, these things happen in our community.

Never consider someone who is seeking to adopt for a friend or family member or who wants to give the animal as a gift. You will want to speak directly with the individual who will be responsible for the animal's care and wellbeing.

Begin the conversation by telling callers you are very attached to the animal and are interested in finding the best home possible. State that you would like to ask the caller some questions. Animal people won't mind; they know the importance of finding a good match for the animal. Those who seem offended or balk at the prospect of being screened should not be considered as a good prospect.

If at any time during the conversation you feel the caller cannot provide an appropriate home or the caller and the animal are not suited to one another, simply say you don't think this animal would be a good match. Politely thank him/her for calling and end the call.

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“Given what you’ve told me, I don’t think this dog/cat would be a good pet for you. I’m sorry this didn’t work out, but I appreciate your interest and call.”

Ask callers if they currently own any pets. If they do, ask what kind. Ask how old they are and how long the callers have had them. Also, ask if the animals are spayed or neutered. Are their shots current? Are their dogs on heartworm preventative? Anyone who cares about animals will enjoy talking about them. You will learn a lot just by listening.

If someone doesn’t currently have a pet but states that he/she has owned pets in the past, ask what happened to those pets. Let the caller tell you in his/her own words. Hit by a car? Ran off? Given away because the furniture was clawed, children were jumped on, or there were too many “accidents”? We recommend these individuals not be considered as serious pet owners.

Carefully question people who say they have never owned a pet before. Ask why they are interested in adopting now. Listen carefully to the answers.

“Where will you keep the dog?”

Anyone who says the dog will be kept outside requires further questioning. Obviously, you will not want to place a dog in a home situated on a busy street with no fence or in a home that intends to keep the dog chained.

“What accommodations to you have for the dog/cat?”

Do not let people know what you want to hear. Do NOT ask, “Do you have a fenced-in yard?” The very way this question is asked tells the caller you want a “yes” answer, and that is what you’re likely to get...fence or no fence!

If you are placing a cat, you will want it kept indoors.

“Are you looking for an outdoor cat, indoor cat, or one that will be both outdoors and indoors?”

Asking this question in multiple-choice form is more likely to get you an honest answer. Any answer other than “the cat will be kept strictly indoors” is unacceptable.

“Oh, I’m sorry. I’m seeking a strictly indoor home for my/this cat, but I appreciate your call.”

Don’t believe callers who suddenly change their minds and tell you they will keep the cat indoors. One miss of the litter pan, one clawing of the furniture, one jump on the kitchen table or counter, and the cat will be outdoors!

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Checking a Vet Reference

Anyone who has or has had pets should have a vet reference. A vet reference is key to finding a responsible and caring placement. Ask, “Who is your veterinarian?” Anyone who hedges on the vet’s name and address is not a good prospect. A loving pet owner can give you the vet’s name as readily as the family doctor’s name.

“As I stated in the ad, I am requiring a vet reference. Tell me, who is your veterinarian?”

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Do not assume because someone has provided a vet's name that the reference will be a good one. Ask the caller under what name the records are filed. Place a call to the vet on every caller you consider a serious prospect. When you contact the vet's office you will need to know if the caller's pets were kept current on shots, if dogs were on heartworm preventative, if cats were kept indoors, if pets were seen more than annually, and if the vet would consider your caller a good home. CCA has NEVER had a vet refuse to help us. Any vet who is unwilling to provide a reference probably has nothing good to say. If the vet is unwilling to provide a reference, don't consider this individual a good home for your pet.

"Hi, my name is Kitty Litter, and I'm currently running an ad to rehome my dog/place a stray cat I found. Mr. Bill Smith has expressed interest in adopting my dog/this cat and has given me your practice as a vet reference. I'm interested in knowing what kind of care his pets have received."

Does the information provided by the vet's office match what you were told by Mr. Smith? Don't be afraid to ask the veterinary office, ***"Would you consider Mr. Smith to be a responsible pet owner?"***



Conducting a Home Visit

If you are satisfied with the information you received from both the individual and the vet, the next step is to conduct a home visit. This is important for two reasons. First, you will want to ensure the person or family is prepared. In addition, the transition to a new home will be much easier for the animal if you take it to its new home vs. having a "stranger" come and take the animal away.

Make an appointment to visit the home. If you are placing a dog and a fenced yard is part of the adoption arrangement, walk the fence. Look for any gaps, holes, or damage that may allow the dog to escape.

If a cat is being adopted, do you see a litter pan in place? Are food and water set out? If not, it would appear there are no preparations for an indoor cat.

If the dog you are placing will be a companion to another animal, you will want to ensure there are no issues. If the animals are not getting along, you can suggest another meeting on neutral ground. This might help alleviate territorial issues. More than one "play date" may be necessary. Cats are often less eager to accept a new brother or sister. It's important the new owner understand that a slow introductory period will result in a better outcome.

You may want to ask the new owner an adoption agreement. At the very least, you will want to ensure the new owner understands your continued investment in the animal. If the adoption is unsuccessful, you would want the new owner to contact you; and together you can work on next steps. Under no circumstances would you want the animal surrendered to an animal shelter without your knowledge and approval.



Concerned Citizens for Animals understands this information can, at first read, appear overwhelming. If this is the first time you have ever placed an animal in a new home, these details are very important. Unfortunately, times have changed. People do not always present themselves in an honest way when you have something they want.

Even those seasoned in placing animals will benefit from these guidelines. The time you invest in placing an animal can make the difference between a pet who is loved and well cared for and one who isn't. The effort you make will make the difference between a successful placement and one that isn't. The animal you are placing is counting on you!

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