

Dog rescues exist to see that dogs whose first homes did not work out, but who could be healthy and happy pets, get a second chance. Most rescues are operated by volunteers who specialize in one or two breeds with which they have years of experience. Each rescue operation is different. Some, like Whippets, are connected with a national breed club. Some are large organizations with many members; most are individuals or families who work virtually alone to save as many dogs as possible in their own areas.

These people keep an eye on local animal shelters and try to "bail out" dogs of their breeds whenever they show up. Other dogs come directly to rescue from owners who are unable to keep them; some are found abandoned. Another type of rescue worker is called a shelter walker or pound walker. These folks identify purebred dogs in their local shelters and try to contact each breed's rescue organization to get them out.

Because of restrictive laws passed by the Virginia legislature in 2002, whippet rescuers in our state are no longer affiliated with the national organization, Whippet Rescue and Placement. ([Click here for details about the laws.](#)) However, we, along with several others, do take in, foster, and place whippets in need, working as individuals, not as representatives of the national rescue effort. Please contact us if you need to turn in a whippet or would like to adopt one.

New rescue dogs are evaluated for health, temperament, training, and other things that might affect their ability to be successful pets. They're given necessary vet care and shots and washed and groomed. A few can be adopted out immediately but more commonly they stay with the rescuer or in another foster home for anywhere from a few weeks to several months. They may have medical problems or need some training before placement. They sometimes are underweight and badly in need of grooming--long-haired breeds frequently must be shaved to the skin to remove mats. Sometimes the dog has been abused or neglected and is nervous and frightened. He must learn to trust people before he has any hope of finding a successful home.

Money for rescue comes from donations for adoptions, the rescuer's own pocket, and sometimes from the national breed club - rescue operations are seldom in the black. Expenses can be overwhelming and dictate the limit on how many dogs can be accepted.

Why do rescues require spaying/neutering?

Neutered dogs make better pets because they're less likely to roam and several types of behavior problems are less common. They are healthier for longer -- ask your vet about his oldest healthy patients and you'll find they're all neutered. There are no significant disadvantages to neutering when weighed against the health benefits.

Rescued dogs in particular should not be bred. No responsible breeder uses a dog of unknown ancestry. Rescuers see every day the misery that comes from irresponsible breeding...from placement in bad homes to genetic problems to temperament difficulties. The number of purebred dogs euthanized every year is staggering. Rescued dogs should never be used to contribute to the very problem that often brings them to rescue.

Why adopt a rescue dog?

You can get a dog at an animal shelter for \$25-\$75. A purebred pet from a quality breeder might cost \$300-\$1500, depending on the breed. Why should you pay an adoption fee of \$150-\$200 for a rescue?

As with a shelter adoption, you're giving a dog a second chance -- a worthwhile and very satisfying thing to do. If your home is flexible and you are experienced with dogs, by all means, taking one from the shelter is a good option. However, unlike the shelter animal, a rescue has been evaluated by people who know the breed and who believe that your adoptee is a suitable pet. If it needs training, you'll be told what it needs and the training most likely has been started. If there are ways this animal is different or if it has special needs, you'll be told up front.

Many people become interested in a breed for its appearance or because it is a current trend. They are often unpleasantly surprised when they discover that living with the breed is not at all what they expected! Rescuers know the breed's characteristics and can advise you on whether you really want one. Every breed is right for someone, but no breed is right for everyone.

Most important, rescue makes a real effort to match an adoptee to your household. That means lots of picky questions and possibly even being turned down for a particular dog or breed -- but it also means that when you do adopt, you start with a much better chance of success. Not

every dog is suitable for every home. Rescue would not place a very shy dog in a noisy home with children or a large, boisterous dog with a frail person. The rescue dog has already had at least one unsuccessful experience; his next home should be his permanent one.

Because they rarely stay long and aren't watched closely, shelter dogs can have health problems that will have to be diagnosed and treated after you adopt. A rescue dog has usually lived in the home of a knowledgeable dog person for a few weeks or months before it's adopted. Rescuers with several years of experience in the breed know the common problems -- they may even know more about specific breed medical and behavioral problems than most vets, who cannot specialize in one breed. No one can predict your dog's future or spot every problem, but rescue is miles ahead of most places you could get a dog.

Your rescue dog will be up to date on all recommended shots, not just the legal minimum. You'll get a shot record and as complete a health record as possible, plus recommendations for future care.

With a shelter dog, you usually get a brief guarantee period. A rescue volunteer will usually be there to help with any problems when they start ... before things get so bad you have to give the dog up. You can call whenever you have a question or problem. And if it turns out that you can't keep the dog, rescue will take him back at any time...whether it's a week or five years from now.

Finally, most people who get or work with rescue dogs believe that these animals know that they've gotten a second chance and try harder than the average dog to fit in. Rescues are often the **best** dogs, no kidding.

About those picky questions...

(Note: Different rescue organizations have different requirements for homes. This section is based on our own feelings about the interview process, but we think they're pretty typical.)

You may wonder when you talk to a rescuer if it wouldn't be easier to marry his daughter than to adopt a dog though him! Do you have a fenced yard? Have you had dogs before? What

happened to them? Do you have children? What ages? Do you rent? Does your lease allow pets? And on, and on ...

Next to having a child, getting a dog is one of the most demanding things most people do and there can be problems when people don't realize how big a commitment it is. Because the commitment is lifelong, a dog should never be adopted on a whim ... you may move on to other interests next year, but you still have a living, feeling animal who needs your love and attention as much as he did the day you brought him home.

Many people who believe they know what a dog needs are remembering a childhood pet who was cared for by mom and dad, and during a time when things were simpler. Most breeds have some specific needs, for example a Whippet or Greyhound must have a fenced area to run in at least once or twice a week and must never be off leash except in such an area; a protective breed needs an owner with a special commitment to training and responsible handling; and a breed that drools or sheds a lot needs an owner who isn't a fussy housekeeper. The questions help both the rescuer and the adopter recognize possible problems before they develop.

And sadly, there are a few people who want dogs for all the wrong reasons--for example, dog fighting or for "baiting" fighting dogs--and those people can be weeded out through a comprehensive interview process.

Some rescuers even require a home visit. You may feel a bit like a social worker is checking on your children. Don't be offended. These visits are just the last step in assuring that you and the rescuer have covered all the bases. Did you know there was a hole under the fence in the backyard? Have you thought about how your new dog might react to the aggressive fence-fighter next door?

Rescue dogs are already 'second chance' dogs; the questions are part of an attempt to get these deserving animals into the best possible and permanent homes. Don't hesitate to ask the reason for a question or to add information. For instance, you may live in an apartment, but near a park where you could take the dog to exercise. Most rescue organizations say they require a fenced yard, but if your last dog died at age 16 and you gave all his walks on a leash every day of his life, speak up!

(A fenced yard? Most dogs are turned out to do their business and if there's no fence they often wind up lost or hit by a car. Many people feel that their dogs when let out the door will stay at home, but all dogs wander sometimes -- if he sees a cat, another dog or perhaps a squirrel, or if a dog thief spots him, your best friend can be gone in an instant. Most rescuers have heard hundreds of these stories.)

In most breeds, every rescuer has more dogs than she/he wants, most of the time. In asking these questions, they're not trying to be difficult; they very much want your home to be one of the success stories. Most are flexible, at least to some extent, and every case is different. Please be patient with the questions and understand that they are only asked to ensure the best for both you and the dog...to spare both of you the heartbreak of an adoption that doesn't work.

More about adoption donations...

So if a rescue dog came from someone who didn't want him, how come you have to pay for him? Aren't you giving a home to a dog no one else wanted? Isn't that enough?

Here are some typical rescuer costs:

For the first month, every rescue dog:

Dog food (premium brand) - \$7.00

"Well pet" Vet visit (exam and shots) - \$40.00

Heartworm check - \$20.00

Heartworm preventive medication - \$7.00

Collar and leash - \$10.00

Flea treatment and/or preventive - \$7.00

Spay, no complications - \$75.00

This typical minimum total is \$166.

In addition to the above, many rescued dogs also require:

Food for additional 6 months - \$42.00;

Cleaning teeth with spay - \$40.00

Crate to transport to new home - \$40.00-80.00

Treatment of heartworms - \$200.00 - 400.00

Treatment of simple intestinal parasites \$20.00

Long distance/internet charges - \$10.00

200 mile (round trip) pickup of dog - \$40.00

Adoption fee from shelter - \$50.00

Other medical problems - \$100.00 and up (Urinary, ear and eye infections, injuries, often neglected ones, arthritis in seniors, tumors/cysts, skin problems caused by neglect, hard-to-treat intestinal parasites are typical.)

The cost for one of these "special case" dogs can be well over \$800.

And then there are the 'nickel and dime' ongoing supplies -- shampoos, toys, treats, vitamins, plus the one-time costs of crates, mats, grooming equipment, fencing, food and water bowls, etc. All of this comes out of the rescuer's pocket up front. Most of it will never be recovered, but if the adoption fees take care of the 'big stuff,' the rescue can take in one more dog!

You can imagine how things go. One dog arrives in good health, housetrained, and with no behavior problems, up to date on vet work (from a good owner who is, perhaps, moving to England) and goes out to someone on a waiting list in less than a week. Maybe he was even dropped off and picked up at your house. Very little expense to the rescuer. But next you get an older dog, needing a spay, heartworm treatment, and other medical work. She must be picked up in a distant city and because she needs confidence building and since older dogs aren't in great demand, she stays a year before being placed. Total donation for both dogs, \$300-\$400; total costs well over \$1000. No rescue will refuse an extra donation if you can afford it.

So why do rescuers do it?

For the same reason you want to adopt: They love the dogs. Many rescuers participate in dog shows and are committed to improving the breed overall. It is a way of giving something back to the breeds which have provided so much joy over the years. Still others enjoy working with lots of different dogs, many of whom have special training needs. And there is a unique sense of fulfillment in seeing a frightened, unhappy, and sometimes sick animal come into the program, gradually improve, and finally leave to become a healthy, happy, and beloved member of a very

special family. All rescuers get a lot of satisfaction from helping good dogs and good people find happiness together.

Where can I find a rescue group?

Just check out our links page for lists of rescue organizations all over the world.