



# Rescuing A Pet 101

By Debbie | Evert

"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

—Mahatma Gandhi

Approximately eight million unwanted animals are given to shelters annually, according to [TheAnimalRescueSite.com](http://TheAnimalRescueSite.com). Shelters come in all shapes and sizes. Although many rescue groups do not have a physical building, others have buildings that range in size from trailers to warehouses. Some groups are mobile and travel to retail stores to host adoption fairs.

9 Lives Rescue doesn't have a physical facility but is mobile, hosting weekly adoption fairs for cats. Dogs can be seen by making an appointment. Adoptable pets stay in foster homes until permanent homes can be found. "The number of cats and dogs we can rescue depends directly on the number of foster homes we have," according to [colorado9lives.com](http://colorado9lives.com). "The more people willing to foster, the more animals we can rescue." It is their objective to make every effort to place all animals that come into their care into appropriate loving homes.

[Petfinder.com](http://Petfinder.com) is a popular national website to find adoptable pets. Not only can you browse for pets by type or location, you can also learn helpful information before and after adopting your new animal companion. Click on the "Before You Adopt" tab and you'll see dozens of stories from A to Z, such as "A Companion Animal's Golden Years," "Choosing the Right Companion Bird," and "Is Your Pet Legal?"

Educational opportunities are also available via video format. Subjects such as training, healthcare, and lifestyle issues—allergies, travel, and going green—will help make you a well-educated pet parent. And in case you just want to have fun, there's a tab for that on this site.

Can't waste time using the Internet? A rescue group in Kansas City has "an app for that." Wayside Waifs has added a phone application to their site that allows you to create and publish lost and found pet postings and access information about their services and volunteer opportunities. Regardless of the size and format of the rescue group, the goal is to reduce the four to five million pets that are euthanized annually.

So, you've done your homework thoroughly and found your new family member. The shelter provided minimal information about him. Now what? Unfortunately, many of these rescued pets do not come with a blueprint of their pedigree, age, medical, or behavioral issues.

One local group, Safe Place for Pets, finds new homes for pets of terminally ill owners. Some pets are surrendered while the owner is still alive and information can be gathered. However, some owners have died and this rescue group has to determine the pet's current condition through a process of examinations and observations. After an initial contact by a pet owner or friend/family member, Safe Place for Pets gets to work. An animal assessor will help to assess the health of the pet to ensure she is strong enough to make it through the process of potential visits to the veterinarian, foster family, and finally a furever family. Ninety-five percent of the time, there's no problem with the pet," says Cathy Woods, president and placement coordinator. "The pets usually come from loving homes."

If this isn't your situation, find someone who can help you assess your new pet's health and behavior by choosing an animal trainer. Jim Beinlich, co-owner of Cool K9's with wife Bianca, says "the biggest thing to look for initially in a dog is any form of aggression: food, toys, and physical contact. "You have to factor in a honeymoon period of 7 to 10 days" for everyone to adjust to the changes by having a new pet in the house, Beinlich says. "At this point, the dog says, 'this is my home now; I can let my hair down and really be me.' You can potentially start expecting to see other behaviors—chewing, aggression—manifest."

Cool K9's gives a 20 percent discount for rescue dogs "to help prevent, alleviate these behaviors." Beinlich encourages people to get their new dog into a training class right away. He also says to do your homework on dog trainers. Although cost is a factor, he says not to base your final decision on that. Make contact with the trainer by phone, if possible. "Get a good feel for the person you'll be working with," he says. "If your gut says no, go on to the next person." Additionally, look for accredited education and read testimonials about the trainer and the business before you make a decision.

The bond between human and animal begins with the first meeting and continues throughout the lives of the two. A new non-profit group in the Pikes Peak region recognizes this bond and seeks to keep it strong. Harley's Hope Foundation was created by David and Cynthia Bullock following the loss of their dog, Harley, to cancer. The Bullocks, who took Harley through several months of chemotherapy in an effort to save her life, realized that many people don't have the financial means to do everything they can for their companion animals. They honor Harley's memory by creating an organization to help pets and their people deal with unexpected hardships. They created a fund to assist with major and emergency veterinary care or behavior modification for pets in danger of losing their homes. All applicants must provide proof of financial need. "We've had four veterinarian emergencies so far" and are working another case, Cynthia Bullock, executive director of the foundation, said. "Some emergencies are preventable."

Another step this group is taking is to provide education to the community. The same resources aren't always available for fur family members versus humans, and the foundation takes a proactive approach, according to the executive director. Through their resources and services, they are helping to ensure their quality of life by preserving the human-animal bond.

Regardless of how you find your pet, what condition that pet is in, and how much information you know about this new family member, do your research and take your time. The investment you make now can pay great dividends of many happy years of unconditional love.

*The summer issue of PETacular will take a look at additional training and rehabilitation options for your rescued pet and how to assess your new companion's needs based on breed, various behavior problems as well as how to find out what breeds are in your new mixed-breed dog through DNA testing.*