

## **So You Want a Rescue to Take Your Pet?**

Dog trainer on WREC

By Cindy Wolff

One of the most frustrating parts of writing a pet column is the phone calls from people wanting me to find a home for their pets. They're getting a divorce. They're moving in with someone who won't allow pets. They are having a baby. They're tired of their pet. The dog is barking too much. It can't be housebroken. The cat won't use the litter box. Excuses, excuses, excuses.

The caller is sometimes sad about breaking the bond they have with their pet. But, oh well. It has to go. They don't want to hear solutions or suggestions. They don't want to spend \$20 for a dog trainer. They don't want to look for another place to live that will accept their pet. They want to hurt the soon-to-be-ex-spouse.

They want a place to dump their pet that will help them feel a little less creepy about their decision.

The first question they typically ask: Is there a rescue group I can give my dog to? No. There isn't. There's not one rescue group calling around asking for pets to take in. At least none are calling here. They're up to their armpits in dogs and cats. Every spare penny of their paycheck goes to take care of them. Any free time is spent caring for them. Dozens of tireless, animal-loving volunteers work full-time jobs and then go home to take care of a house full of foster pets. Their own animals get some attention, too. They go to the shelter and try to save some of the cats and dogs from the trauma of the noise and commotion or the sadness that comes with being abandoned by an owner. Or they find strays on the street, former pets roaming the neighborhoods looking for a friendly face to save them.

These rescuers spend hundreds of their own money to rehabilitate these animals and then keep them in their home for months searching for a permanent home. Some people balk at spending \$65 or more to adopt one of these rescued animals. But the price doesn't touch what is actually spent on the pets. It's just a figure that covers part of the expense while giving the animal a monetary value. Some people treat things they pay for better than things they get for free.

Here's the easiest way to never have to put yourself in the position to find a home for your pet. Don't get one unless you are absolutely committed to taking care of it for its entire life. It's not an impulse purchase. It's not a possession that gets tossed out in the divorce.

It's a deal breaker when you're looking for a place to live. It's your responsibility, no matter what.

Don't kid yourself that the pet you dump at a shelter will find a home. Remember, no one is looking for it. The shelter doesn't have to hold it for three working days in hopes that an owner will retrieve it. If the cages are full, which they typically are, chances are your pet, the one that gave you unconditional love and companionship, will be marched straight back to the euthanasia room. No second chance. No better home. No owner to rescue it. Just an undeserved ending because someone didn't think ahead before adopting it.

Part of being a responsible human being is acknowledging that you aren't capable of being a responsible pet owner. There's no shame in admitting that. Some people don't like pets. They don't want the responsibility or expense of pet ownership. They don't want to make a 12-year commitment. It's much better to find these things out before you adopt a pet than it is to call me.

If you call me, here's what I'll tell you. Make up some cute fliers that feature all your pet's good qualities. State whether the pet is housebroken or not. Don't lie. You aren't doing your pet a favor by misleading a new owner. Run an ad in the newspaper. Screen people. Ask them why they want your pet. Do they have other pets? Do they have a fenced backyard? Will the cat stay indoors? Charge an adoption fee of \$30 or so. You can always waive it after you spend some time with the potential owners. But the fee may weed out some unsavory people who only want a noisemaker in their backyard.

If you have an ounce of decency, you will, at the very least, keep your pet until you find it a good home. No matter how long it takes. It's the least you can do for something that loves you unconditionally.