



NIKE ANIMAL RESCUE FOUNDATION

P.O. Box 26587, San Jose CA 95159

MAIN LINE: 408-224-NARF (6273)

CAT LINE: 408-946-2291

www.narfrescue.org

Finding Fluffy a Home

We'd like to take your pet, but our foster homes are full. Using these guidelines will help **you** find a good home (85% of the pets we hear about are placed this way by the people who have them). Be sure to read them **ALL** the way through the 1st time.

TIP: Follow all suggestions *simultaneously* (rather than one-at-a-time)—you are more likely to be successful, *plus* it will seem like less work.

Finding a home for a pet takes time, so hang in there & don't get discouraged!

If you've **found a stray**, begin at **Step 1**
If your **own pet** needs a new home, begin at **Step 2**

STEP 1: ***FIND THE OWNER***

A skittish animal may NOT be wild or un-owned: *Many* pets won't approach strangers.

- ▶ **CONFINE THE PET**—Ex: the dog in a fenced yard, the cat in a room in the house
- ▶ **ASK AROUND**—kids (they *always* know the local pets), neighbors, newspaper & mail carriers, meter reader--have they seen it before? Ask them to spread the word.
- ▶ **PLACE A 'FOUND PET' AD** in the local newspapers. Be brief and general—include species (dog, cat, other), hair length, size and most obvious colors.
 - Leave out the sex (unless you're *sure*).
 - Leave out the breed--*you and the owner may not agree on what breed it is.*
 - Leave out something for the real owner to identify: markings, a collar
 - Leave out the neighborhood the animal was found in—*animals can travel far on their own, under car hoods or with people who take a "stray" home.*

- ▶ **PUT UP ‘FOUND PET’ FLYERS** at local vet clinics, pet stores, grooming shops, and grocery stores, and at major intersections within 6 blocks, and houses within 2 blocks, of where the animal was found. The more flyers you put out, the better.
- ▶ **CHECK YOUR LOCAL HUMANE SOCIETY**—place a card in the ‘Found Pet’ file. (see the separate Resources sheet or look under Humane Societies in the yellow pages)
- ▶ **CHECK ‘LOST PET’ ADS** in newspapers **& THE ‘LOST PET’ FILE** at your local Humane Society. Think in *general* terms—remember, you & the owner may see the pet differently.
- ▶ If neither you nor anyone you know can keep the pet while you look for the owner, **CALL LOCAL RESCUE GROUPS** or **TAKE THE PET TO A HUMANE SOCIETY**. (See the separate **Resources** sheet.)

**Beware of anyone who offers to
take or place an animal for you for a fee:
In many cases, finding a good home for the pet
is **NOT** their primary interest.**

Note: this does not apply to the agencies listed on the separate Resources sheet

Be sure to mention in your ‘Found Pet’ ad which shelter the animal is in. If you are reluctant to turn a pet over to a shelter, please consider:

- The owners may be on vacation, and miss your flyers & ads
- Some people don’t take the paper, and will miss your ads
- Most people who lose a pet check the local shelter *first*

Humane societies take only healthy, adoptable animals, & keep them as long as possible. County shelters or ‘pounds’ contract to take *all* animals brought to them, keep them 72 hours, then put some to sleep to make room for incoming animals.

**A cat that visits regularly
or gobbles food may not
be lost or starving —
some cats just like to
‘dine out’!**

▶ **CATS ONLY:** If the cat has been around for a while and if the situation is safe (no busy streets, etc.), **PUT A MAKESHIFT COLLAR ON IT** (2 pieces of masking tape, sticky sides together) with **YOUR PHONE NUMBER** and a message on it in waterproof ink. Continue to feed & water the cat. If no one contacts you, it needs your help.

▶ If after a week you haven’t found the owner and haven’t turned the pet over to a shelter or rescue group, proceed to **Step 2**.

There aren't enough homes available: If you want your pet to find one, you must...

STEP 2: MAKE YOUR PET MORE ADOPTABLE

► TO MAKE YOUR PET MORE ATTRACTIVE TO POTENTIAL HOMES,



- Spay or neuter it (most vets will do by 4-mos-old)
- Provide shots & worming
- Get rid of fleas & ear mites
- Test cats for leukemia & FIV, dogs for heartworm
- Treat the pet with a long-acting flea control product (Advantage, Frontline)

Charge an adoption fee to cover your expenses.
(see next page)

For low-cost vaccinations & worming, or help with spaying or neutering, call the groups on the separate Resources sheet.

► **IF IT HAS A HEALTH PROBLEM, TAKE IT TO A VET** for treatment. If you need help with finances or transportation, ask friends, co-workers or rescue organizations to assist you.



► **IF IT HAS A BEHAVIOR PROBLEM, SOLVE IT.**

Peninsula Humane Society Behavior Helpline 415-340-7022 x783
Santa Clara County Humane Society Behavior Helpline 408-727-3383 x753
(Ask your vet for other referrals or options)

NARF has handouts available for most problems, including:

*Missing the Litterbox Aggression Allergies
Scratching Furniture Pets and Babies and many more*

To request info, call 408-946-2291 for cats, 408-224-6273 for dogs

Most behavior problems are easily solved, but if it can't be, and you can't find a new owner who won't mind the problem, consider putting your pet to sleep:

- ► **DON'T** place your pet without disclosing a behavior problem--it's unfair to the new owners and to the animal, which may get abused as a result, and
- ► **DON'T** 'dump' your pet—this ensures misery & death for the pet AND is illegal.

STEP 3: GET THE WORD OUT

**DON'T give a pet
away for FREE!**
(see below)

- ▶ **CONTACT THE AGENCIES & GROUPS** listed on our separate **Resources** sheet.
- ▶ **ASK EVERYONE YOU KNOW**—Don't forget relatives (even if they live out-of-state) and casual acquaintances.
- ▶ **PUT UP FLYERS** with color pictures of your pet at pet stores, veterinary clinics, your workplace, shopping centers, schools, libraries, churches, and anywhere else that people congregate. If you have access to the Internet, get it on the Web. Use pictures of your pet being affectionate or playful—in this case, a picture is worth *more* than a thousand words!
- ▶ **PLACE ADS IN LOCAL PAPERS, PENNYSAVERS, ETC.**—This produces the most responses, but be extra cautious when screening potential homes (see Step 4).



MAKE YOUR AD STAND OUT:

- **WORDING**—be creative, make it funny or sad: “Professional lap-warmer seeks empty lap...”
- **SIZE**—make it longer than 2 lines; put the first line in **bold** print
- **MULTIPLE APPEARANCES**—run more than one ad at a time in the same paper
- **CONTENT**—focus on your pet's most **desirable** or **unique** qualities... ‘good with small children’, ‘already spayed’, ‘fetches’, etc.

- ▶ **ASK AN ADOPTION FEE**—\$20 or more. Specify what the money is for (Ex: the pet has its first shots and is spayed). If you aren't comfortable asking for money for the pet, ask for a donation to a non-profit group that helps animals instead.

GIVING AN ANIMAL AWAY FOR FREE MAY ATTRACT:

Those who want to profit from the pet or use it for other purposes
(fighting-dog bait, snake food, occult purposes, sale to labs for experiments, etc.),
and spur-of-the-moment ‘shoppers’, who can't afford veterinary care,
who don't supervise it (it may be killed accidentally)
or who decide later they don't want it after all
(and take it to the pound, or dump it to starve to death)

► **DON'T BE SPECIFIC ABOUT YOUR PET'S AGE**—Many people have an age prejudice. If your pet is under 6 months, it's a 'puppy' or 'kitten'. From 6 months to 3 years, it is a 'teenage' or 'young' cat or dog. Over 3 years, it is 'quiet', 'mature', 'ideal for an older home'. (You can be more specific about the age during your interviews.)

► **AIM YOUR AD AT A TARGET AUDIENCE**—For example, adult pets are good for young children, or homes where they will be alone all day; quiet, gentle animals are good for the handicapped or for people unsure of animals; older pets are good for seniors (put flyers up at senior centers, retirement communities).

BE FRIENDLY & CHATTY—

People usually like to talk and will tell you what you want to know without an "interrogation".

STEP 4: SCREENING POTENTIAL HOMES

► **INTERVIEW THEM BY PHONE *BEFORE*** inviting them to meet the pet—speak to an adult, not a child or teenager.

► **GET THEIR FULL NAME, ADDRESS, AND PHONE NUMBER:** Keep it! You will need it later (see Step 5).

► **WHAT TO FIND OUT DURING A PHONE INTERVIEW :** (TIP: don't just ask a list of questions—this tends to make people give guarded answers. Instead, start up a conversation—"Have you had a cat (dog) before? Alright! What kind? Oh, aren't those the best?"—and work your questions into the flow of conversation.)

- **What led to their decision to get a pet now?** Watch for poorly thought out reasons (*e.g., just left home & are lonely, child wants one, etc.*).
- **Have they had a pet before?** Where is it now? Pay attention to their history with pets—actions speak louder than words. If they've lost a pet to a preventable cause (hit by car, for example), what steps have they taken to keep their next pet safe? If they've had a pet recently, get the name of their vet. (Don't have one?—Why not?) Ask if you can call their vet's clinic for a personal reference, then DO IT.
- **Who is the pet for?** Interview the person the pet is for—don't let them take it as a 'gift' for someone else. If the pet is for a child, be sure the parents see the pet as a family pet—if the parents don't want the pet for themselves, it may be out the door as soon as the child gets bored with it.

- **How old are they and what is their living situation?** Single? Unmarried couple? Young or established? Military? Retired? You want to find a long-term, permanent home for your pet. In our experience, young people (under 25), unmarried couples, and members of the military tend to move around more and frequently can't take the pet with them. Do they have a backup person to take the pet if they move & can't take it with them or (if elderly) if they become disabled? Confirm *with the backup person* that they are able & willing to take it. Use this situation as an opportunity to educate people: suggest they not get a pet until they know what is happening in their lives and can guarantee the pet a permanent home.
- **What is their financial situation?** Are their jobs reasonably secure? Can they afford veterinary expenses? If they have to move, can they (*will they?*) pay to ship the animal where they are going and then come up with the security deposit (\$500-\$1000) so they can keep it?
- **Do they have kids?** How many and what ages are they? Young children (under 6) can easily hurt or even kill a puppy or kitten unintentionally, by picking it up like a soft toy or running with it and falling on it. For children this age, the best pet is an adult dog or cat who is used to being around children and is known to be gentle with them. Will the pet be able to, and allowed to, avoid the children when it chooses to do so? How? What will the parents do if the cat scratches the child because the child won't leave it alone?
- **Where do they live?** An apartment, mobile home, condo or house? Do they own or rent? Do renters have their landlord's permission to have this type and size of pet? Ask for the landlord's number so you can verify permission by phone, or get the landlord's OK in writing. If they own their home, are they prepared for the inevitable damage & mess that comes with pet ownership?



For information on keeping cats indoors, ask for our Indoor Cats handouts.

- **Where will the pet stay during the day? At night?** Will the cat be kept safely inside, away from animals & people (including annoyed neighbors) that might harm it? Will the dog be kept in the house as part of the family? Is there a yard? Is the yard completely fenced, with a gate? How high is the fence? If there is no yard, how will the dog's trips outdoors be handled? (Chaining it up or letting it run loose are not acceptable solutions.) Is the area safe? Near a busy street? In the country, where coyotes, raccoons, dog packs, or irate ranchers may be a threat? (Even properly confined pets can accidentally slip out and be at risk.)

- **How many hours will the pet be alone per day?** Young pets need timely discipline & frequent interaction to prevent behavior problems. Dogs, especially, are pack animals and need companionship—without it, they get bored & lonely and develop behavior problems like barking, chewing or digging. What arrangements will be made for when the family is away at work or school? Do they have a dog-proof area for the dog to stay in? Will the cat be confined until trained not to scratch the furniture?
- **Are they willing to have someone come & visit their home to see where the animal will be living?** If not, don't give them the pet—you have no way of knowing if the situation is safe or the home is a good one..
- **Will they spay or neuter your pet?** Better yet, alter your pet *before* giving it to its new home—most vets will do the surgery when the pet is 4-months-old, some will do it as early as 8 weeks, and financial assistance is available—see the separate Resources sheet. 10 million pets are euthanized each year because too many were born—don't risk letting your pet add to this number.
- **What will they do when the kitty scratches the furniture?** Do not adopt to someone who is planning to declaw—explain it is cruel to the cat and prevents it from defending itself when it gets outside, plus it can cause behavior problems, such a biting or avoiding the litterbox. There are other ways to prevent furniture-scratching (contact us for the appropriate handout).



Ask us for information on how to help a new pet's introduction & training be problem-free.

- ▶ **BE HONEST ABOUT POTENTIAL PROBLEMS** they may have with your pet (barking due to separation anxiety, etc.) and make sure they are prepared to deal with the problems, rather than just getting rid of the animal.

STEP 5: MEETING A POTENTIAL NEW HOME

- ▶ **HAVE THEM COME TO YOUR HOME** to meet your pet: Animals are more relaxed and show their personalities better in familiar surroundings.



- ▶ **MEET THE ENTIRE FAMILY**—Wonderful adults don't make up for out-of-control children—in a good home, parents control the interactions between young children and pets, so watch for this when they visit your home.
- ▶ **WATCH HOW THEY ACT WITH YOUR PET** — Those who are good with animals show it in the way they approach (or don't approach) them. Is everyone in the family, especially the parents, enthused about petting and playing with it?
- ▶ **INSIST ON DELIVERING YOUR PET** — Explain you would like to see where the pet will be living—pet lovers will understand. Look around--are you comfortable with the cleanliness & safety of the place? Are the other pets well-cared-for?
- ▶ **ASK TO BE ALLOWED TO VISIT** a time or two to be sure the pet is settling in well—then **DO IT**, a few weeks after it goes to its new home.
- ▶ **HAVE THEM AGREE TO RETURN YOUR PET IF IT DOESN'T WORK OUT.**
- ▶ **MOST IMPORTANTLY, TRUST YOUR INTUITION:** If the person seems very nice and answered all the questions correctly, but something doesn't feel right, **GO WITH THE FEELING** and **DON'T** let them have your pet! A nice way to turn someone down is to say you've had a lot of calls and want to contact everyone before making your decision (which you do). When you call them back, you can honestly say you've found the perfect match with someone else.

STEP 6: WHAT IF...

Be willing to have your vet put your pet to sleep if the right home isn't found. Turning a pet over to the wrong home does it no favors: Your conscience may rest easier, but your pet has to *live* there, and may suffer as a result.

We hope these guidelines help you find a **good** home for your pet. If after reading them, you still have ANY questions, please contact us again.



BEST OF LUCK!

(Many thanks to Glenda Moore for the use of graphics from her website, CatStuff)
<http://www.xmission.com/~emailbox/graphics.htm>

***Please SAVE these guidelines for future reference
or PASS THEM ON to someone else in need.***