

# **How to recognize a responsible rescue organization**

## **Overview**

A rescue organization is only as good as its members and governing board. A rescue dealing with purebred dogs should have a firm understanding of the health, temperament and behaviors of the breed they work with. Normally, a rescue acquires animals from the shelters and humane societies. Some also accept dogs directly from the owners. Before an animal is acquired, it should have gone through a temperament test where the animal is evaluated for aggression issues. Once passed, the animal will go through a quarantine process and given vaccinations, rabies, a spay/neuter if not already done, monthly heartworm preventative (providing the dog is heartworm negative) and flea and tick prevention. Also any other health ailments will be addressed and treated during this time.

## **Temperament testing**

A temperament (or temp) test is not the end all-be all. It simply means that the dog has passed a certain criteria as set forth by the rescue organization. Most rescues have set guidelines that the tester must adhere too. As we all know, dogs have the ability to kill and maim. This must be addressed and to act as if it doesn't or couldn't happen is an injustice to the dog. Any organization or individual dealing with canines should keep this in the front of their minds. For a rescue to knowingly adopt out an aggressive dog simply to spare a canine life would be grossly negligent. Rescues that do adopt out possibly aggressive dogs need to severely re-evaluate their temp-testing process. Any responsible rescue should answer inquiries into their temp testing method.

## **Foster care programs**

With that being said, the dog is placed in a foster care program. The dog will live in a member's home until placed for adoption. The animal should be worked with and trained to learn at least the basics of obedience training, house training and socialization. Most of the time a dog is turned into the shelter for lack of training to begin with. When placed in a new home, the dog will need to continue with the training. The rescue should be more than willing to help with any issues the adopter may have. This is where experience comes in best. There is no book or website that can possibly cover the amount of experience a responsible rescue has in the hands of its members. Also, potential adopters need to realize mistakes can and will happen, even with the best trained dog. A period of adjustment is needed.

## **Strict adopter background and lifestyle checking**

Prior to an animal being adopted, the rescue should complete a series of checks. These checks include vet and personal reference checks. Once these are complete, a home check should be scheduled to see where the dog will be living and if the dog will get along with other members of the family (human and animal). Some adopters may think this is invasive; however, a rescue that places an animal in any home without ensuring the safety and welfare of the animal first and foremost is detrimental to the breed and the public. A responsible rescue will have an agreement signed stating that if the dog is not maintained to humane standards, the dog will be relinquished back to the rescue.

## **Medical records and treatment**

When the animal is adopted, all medical records should go with that animal. This information should be readily available to the adopter for their current vet to add to their records. If the animal for any reason does not work out, the rescue should bring it back into their program. All means of keeping the dog in the home should be exhausted prior to uprooting the dog yet again.

A responsible rescue will maintain the health of their animals through vaccinations, routine preventative and vet visits. They should train the dog to acceptable standards. They will ensure that the dog will go to a home that the dog will flourish in. They will maintain communication with the adopters to assist in any training or behavioral issues that come to light. A responsible rescue will place the animal's health and welfare above all other things considered.