

Special Considerations for Choosing a Rescue/Shelter Dog

There are always many factors to consider when selecting a new dog for your home, but selecting a rescue dog involves additional considerations. The dog may have been given up by another owner or have spent time living on the street. They could be stressed or fearful when introduced to your home. Peruse the following tips to improve your chances for a successful adoption.



Do Your Homework

Consider what traits are important to you in a companion. Do you have children? Other dogs? Cats? Do you like to spend weekends hiking or are you a couch potato? What type of social activities will you require your dog to participate in?

Though shelter dog breeds may not be apparent, you should still have an idea of what breed types will fit best in your lifestyle and which traits are most important to you. If there is a particular breed that interests you, contact a breed-specific rescue to start your search.

Ask About Temperament Testing

Many dogs do not display their true personality in a rescue situation. They are often stressed, which cause them to shut down and hide traits that may appear in your home or over-exaggerate traits that may not appear in your home. Temperament testing offers the best chance that aggression or other problem behaviors will be revealed.

Interact with the Dog

This may seem like a no-brainer, but there are several warning signs you can observe yourself if the dog has not been temperament tested. Take the dog out of his kennel to a quiet place where you can interact. The dog should run toward you when you call and seek out petting. If he does not, this is a warning that he might be fearful of people. Pet the dog all over her body. If she pulls away or shows some type of aggression, this will be a dog that might be difficult to groom or handle. If she is a small dog, pick her up. Even if you don't know the dog well, she should be comfortable with a little handling.

Walk the dog around on a leash. If he doesn't walk well on-leash, that will be easy to train, but if he is fearful, that could be a problem. Watch how the dog responds to loud noises or distractions. If he startles easily, this can be a warning.

Introduce All Family Members

If you have children, a spouse or another dog, make sure everyone gets a chance to interact with the dog. The dog should approach your husband and children with the same excitement with which she approached you. If she seems hesitant around your children, she may not make a good family dog.

If you have other pets in your home, such as a cat, ask how the dog interacts with cats. If no one knows, ask if they are willing to arrange a meeting with a cat so you can observe his behavior.

Take Time

Don't make any snap decisions. Don't choose a dog just because you feel sorry for her. Make sure you feel a connection and the dog meets all the requirements on which you previously decided with your family. Take some time to think about your decision so that you don't make a snap decision based on emotion.

Resources

- To find rescues, shelters and pets for adoption in your area, visit www.petfinder.com
- The new Shelter Pet Project site has an interactive form you can use to find the "right" shelter pet for you. - <http://www.theshelterpetproject.org/>
- The ASPCA has a shelter pet database searchable via zip code - <http://www.aspca.org/adoption/>
- Adopt A Pet also has a shelter pet directory - <http://www.adoptapet.com/>
- If you're looking for a purebred, the AKC has a breed rescue directory - <http://www.akc.org/breeds/rescue.cfm>