



Regina
Humane
Society

Re-Homing Guide



MORE than a Shelter

Box 3143 Highway #6 North & Armour Road Regina, SK S4P 3G7
Phone: (306) 543-6363 • www.reginahumanesociety.ca

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
What to Do If You Found a Stray	4
How to Get the Word Out	6
The Adoption Process	9
Some Final Words of Advice and Encouragement	15
Sample Forms	16

Introduction

Has something happened in your life and you can no longer take care of your pet? Or perhaps you have found a stray cat or dog and need to find him/her a home. Maybe a friend or relative has died, leaving one or more pets to be placed in a new home. You want to be able to do something to help find a new and loving permanent home, rather than turning the pet over to the Regina Humane Society (RHS), where there are already so many animals needing new homes.

We hope the suggestions in this booklet will help you achieve your goal. First, we will talk about what to do if you found a stray.

If you do need to find a new home for the pet, we will show you how to get the word out. We will talk about how to create an effective flyer, how to take a good photograph of the pet and how to write imaginative text (to capture the attention of a prospective adopter) for a flyer or a classified ad. We will show you how to take advantage of the networks already established to advertise your animal.

We then discuss the preparation of the pet: making sure that the animal's vaccinations are up-to-date and that he/she is healthy, bathed and groomed.

We also walk you through the adoption process. We suggest questions to ask to find out if the prospective adopter will provide a suitable home and provide information on how to finalize the adoption.

At the end of this guide, you will find examples of a medical record and an adoption screener's worksheet.

Finally, we offer some words of encouragement in your quest to find a good new home.



What to Do If You Found a Stray

Every year, thousands of dogs and cats escape from their homes and are never reunited with their rightful owners. The burden of finding and recovering a displaced dog or cat rests solely on the shoulders of the owner, who, in most cases, is not trained in how or where to search. People who lose their beloved dogs and cats need all the help they can get in order to achieve a successful reunion.

When you've found a pet, remember to always put your safety first. Do not attempt to pick up or contain an animal that is acting aggressive. If you feel unsafe handling the animal, contact RHS Animal Protection Services for assistance at 306-777-7700.

It is important to assume that the animal you have found does have people who love them and miss them very much. It is easy to jump to conclusions about the animal based on their physical condition or behavior. Many animals deteriorate quickly when separated from their families and appear neglected or under-nourished. As well, some animals are naturally shy or fearful of new situations. This does not necessarily mean that they have been abused or treated poorly.

Lost dogs and cats that are not returned to their families take up valuable space in our animal shelters, rescue groups, or wind up in feral cat colonies. When you find a stray dog or cat, assume that someone is looking for that particular companion animal and follow the steps below to support a successful reunion before taking steps to find the animal a new home.

The following list will help you locate the lost pet's owner:

- Check to see if the animal has any form of identification – city license, tattoo, rabies tag, personalized identification tag or microchip. These can be used to locate the owner through the RHS Lost and Found Department.
- Contact the RHS Lost and Found Department to report the found pet or file a Found Pet Report online at www.reginahumanesociety.ca.
- Create a Found Profile and check Lost Profiles for the pet you have found at the following:
 - ~ Regina Lost and Found Dogs
 - ~ Regina Lost and Found Cats
 - ~ Petlynx.net



- ~ Kijiji
- ~ Used Regina
- ~ Regina Leader-Post
- ~ Local Animal Rescues Groups

- Post notices in the area where the animal was found with a description or photo and information about how you can be contacted.
- Ask neighbours, the mail carrier or children playing in the area if they recognize the cat or dog you have found, or if they know of a household that recently lost a pet.
- If someone claims to be the animal's owner, insist on identification and proof of ownership before releasing him.

If you end up reuniting a lost pet with its family, we want to congratulate you on a job well done! You not only helped make a family very happy, you also helped prevent needless suffering, potential injury (or worse) or homelessness, and you have prevented one more pet from ending up in an animal shelter or rescue group.



How to Get the Word Out

If you do need to find a new home for a pet, you will want to advertise as widely as you can, in as many places as possible. Creating a flyer is a great way to start. Here is what to put on the flyer:

- Describe the appearance, size and age of the animal.
- Include the pet's name and a good photograph of the pet (see below).
- If the pet is spayed or neutered, include that information.
- Describe his/her nature and appealing qualities.
- Define any limitations the pet might have (e.g., not good with cats or small children).
- Do not forget your phone number and the times you can be reached.

When you have made copies of the flyer, post them throughout your community, wherever a good prospective adopter might see them. Ask to put them up at veterinarians' offices, pet supply stores, and the workplaces of your family and friends. Places like health food stores, supermarkets, libraries, churches, and health clubs often have community bulletin boards where anyone can post flyers.

Tips on Taking Good Animal Photographs

Since photos really help people make a connection to an animal, you will want to use a good-quality photograph. Colour is best. When you take the photographs, use a background that is in contrast to the animal to highlight his/her best features. Keep the photo simple and clear with few background distractions, though you might want to use a person, a hand or some other means to show the scale of the pet.

Before snapping the photos, take the time to get the pet as calm and relaxed as possible, so the photos do not show an animal that looks anxious or scared. Ideally, the photo you choose for the flyer should have the eyes of the animal in focus.

But do not stop with posting flyers. There are many other ways to spread the word:

- Many rescue organizations or breeders require adopters to return the acquired pet to them as outlined in the adoption contract. Please check with the rescue or breeder where your pet was acquired regarding the return of your pet.
- Check with the source of the pet, i.e.: the breeder. Good ones will attempt to help you with any problems you are having or will take their animals back.

- Contact as many shelters and rescue groups as possible. They might be able to put you in contact with someone who is looking for the kind of pet you are trying to place or they could have some other suggestions.
- Contact breed rescue groups if you are trying to place a specific breed. For example, if you have a pug or a Persian cat, there may be rescue groups or clubs that have lists of people looking to adopt that particular breed. Some breed rescue groups might even be willing to place a mix, as long as the animal is close to purebred. You can find local listings of breed rescue groups by doing an Internet search on a search engine such as Google.
- Place a classified ad in your local paper or an online classified service like Used Regina or Kijiji. When you write the ad, be creative (see sample ads on the next page). Try to make the animal as appealing as possible, but tell the truth. If you are trying to place a dog that absolutely cannot be around cats, put that in the ad. Run the ad as many times as you can afford – you are looking to reach a wide audience. It is a good idea to mention in the ad that an adoption fee will be required. Asking for a fee will discourage people who are not serious adopters from following up on your ad. If you feel uneasy about asking for a fee, you can always donate the money to your favourite charity.
- Post your pet on adoption websites. There are general adoption websites, as well as specific sites for certain types of animals (for example, FIV-positive cats, disabled pets, or senior dogs). Petfinder is a good example of a general adoption website.
- Use any and all of your community contacts. Ask friends and family to mention the animal in their church or community newsletter, send an email about the pet through your office memo system, post a notice and photo on your Facebook page or share some flyers with members of clubs or associations to which you belong.
- Do not underestimate word of mouth. Tell anyone and everyone about the pet that needs a home and ask friends and family to help with spreading the word. You never know – your father's neighbor's



daughter could be looking for just the pet you have to offer.

- Get the pet out there (this works especially well with dogs). The more your pet interacts with people, the more likely he/she will charm the right person. If you are trying to place a dog, take him/ her on walks, to pet supply stores or to the local park. Put a colorful bandana on the dog that says, "Adopt me."

Sample Classified Ads

"Betty Lou has a new pair of shoes and she is ready to walk right into your heart! Betty is a two year old spayed female terrier mix. She loves to dance, prance and play. She is a doll! She is good with cats as well. Call Kelly or Doug at 306-555-3576 after 7:00 p.m. weekdays or all day Sunday. Adoption fee required."

"Joe Cocker is coming to town and wants to sing for you. Joe is a three-year-old neutered male cockapoo with a great personality. Loves kids and dogs, but is not as keen on cats! He has had all his shots. Call Morris after 6:00 p.m. at 306-555-4674. Adoption fee required."

"Persian cat with attitude. Martha thinks she rules the world! She is gorgeous, and knows it. She loves to sit on laps and be petted. She would prefer a home where she is the only cat. Adoption fee required. Call Beth at 306-555-8474 from 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. any day."

"SHAMBU is the kind of companion that we all long to have. Loyal, playful, tender and kind best describes this beautiful orange tabby. He is 3 years old, neutered and has had all his shots. He prefers an adults-only home. Call Jeremy at 306-555-2189 before 11:00 a.m. any day. Donation for my favorite animal charity required."



The Adoption Process

How to Prepare the Pet for Adoption

First and foremost, spay or neuter the pet or the stray you are trying to place. Pet overpopulation is an over-whelming problem and we all need to do what we can to prevent more unwanted animals from being born. Next, make sure the animal is up-to-date on vaccinations. Prepare a complete medical record that you can give to the adopter. There is a sample medical record in the sample forms part of this guide. If you are trying to find a home for a stray, you should bring the animal to a veterinarian for a thorough checkup.

You should also prepare a general history of the pet. Include as much information as possible about the pet's likes and dislikes, current food preferences and favourite treats, relationship to other animals and preferred types of toys. All this information will help the adopter get acquainted with the pet and make the transition easier on the animal.

To show the pet's best side, groom and bathe him or her before taking your flyer photos and before showing the pet to a prospective adopter. If it is relevant, talk to a trainer about your pet's disposition. The help of an experienced and caring professional can often help you resolve quirky or destructive behavior, making it easier to place the pet in a new home.



How to Screen Potential Adopters

When someone responds to your flyer or ad, you will want to interview them over the phone before introducing them to the animal. By doing so, you can eliminate unsuitable potential adopters early on. The following are some guidelines for helping you find the best possible new home for your pet or rescued animal.

First, if the caller is a child or a teenager, ask to speak to an adult. If the caller sounds young, but is not a child, ask for his or her age. You should not consider re-homing your animal to anyone under the age of 18.

Remember to always:

- Charge a nominal fee for the animal.
- Be honest about why you are giving up your pet.
- Look for an adopter that has as many questions to ask you as you have to ask them. They will have a true interest in your pet's personality and will be looking for a match.
- Talk to the potential adopter about the importance of obedience training, exercise and grooming.
- Make sure that all potential family members meet, like and want the pet.
- Do not be afraid to refuse an adoption if you do not feel comfortable.

Interviewing the Potential Adopter

The following is a list of questions to ask a prospective adopter. You might want to take notes as you talk to the person. There is an adoption screener's worksheet at the end of this guide that you might find useful.

From the answers to these questions, you can start to build a profile of the person. Try to ask the questions in a conversational style, so it does not sound like you are conducting an interview. To start, you might say: "This dog/cat is very special to me, and I am looking for just the right home for him/her. Would you mind if I asked you a few questions about yourself and your home?"

1. Is the pet for you or someone else?

If the dog or cat is for someone else, then tell the caller that you need to speak directly to the prospective adopter. If the pet is for a child, tell the person that the dog



or cat needs to be seen as a family pet. The parents must be willing to take on the responsibility for the day-to-day care of the animal for the rest of his/her life. Children can be involved in the animal's care, but their attention span is often sporadic. Many pets are turned in to shelters because the children have lost interest.

2. Do you have other pets at home? Would you tell me about them?

Their answers can help you to determine whether the pet you are placing will fit into this household. For example, if you are trying to place a dog who hates cats, and they have cats, this is obviously not a good choice.

If they do not have pets now, ask these questions:

3. Have you had pets before? If so, what happened to them?

Responses to these questions can reveal a lot about the person's level of responsibility. One negative incident in the past should not immediately rule that person out; accidents can happen to even the most caring people.

4. Do you have children? If so, how old are they?

This will be your own judgment call with the pet you are placing. Some pets do well around children while others do not. Keep in mind that even if the prospective adopters have no young children, they need to be aware of the history of the animal, since adults-only homes may receive visits from grandchildren or neighbor kids.

On the other hand, an adult cat or dog that is used to being around small children can make a wonderful family pet. A larger animal is less vulnerable to being hurt by children and an adult animal is usually more tolerant of a toddler's inquiring hands pulling at his/her tail or ears.

The child/animal bond is very special and can be of tremendous value in producing a compassionate, caring person who will bring those qualities into his/her whole life. So the decision to take on a family pet needs to be made with great care.



5. Do you live in a house or an apartment?

It is not necessarily a negative thing if they live in an apartment. Many dogs and all cats do very well in apartments. The proximity encourages close companionship and bonding.

6. If you rent, does your lease allow pets?

If the people are renting, you will need to confirm that they have permission to have a pet. You will also need to inquire if there are any size restrictions (especially for dogs, since some landlords restrict the size of dogs).

7. Can I come to your home, to see where the animal will be living?

If they are unwilling to let you visit, you should cross them off your list. If they are willing, we strongly recommend that you do make the visit for your own peace of mind. Seeing the other pets (if any) in the household will tell you a lot about the level of care your pet will receive. Also, you might notice something that needs to be taken care of before the adoption takes place. For example, say you are placing a dog who is an escape artist and you notice the potential adopter's fence has large holes in it. Some discussion about repairs could solve the problem and the repairs can be done before the animal goes to live there.

8. How many hours would the animal be alone during the day?

The number of hours that an animal will be alone during the day needs to be taken into account. Young dogs and cats can get very lonely and bored – and consequently very destructive – if they are alone a lot. Many adoptions do not work out because prospective adopters were unaware of their pet's social needs.

Dogs have an especially hard time being alone for long periods of time. They are social animals, so they need companionship from either the family or another pet. A lonely, bored dog or puppy can chew through the couch, rip up the carpet or destroy the table legs – just for something to do. Prospective adopters should be

encouraged to make provisions for a young dog if the family is away every day for long hours. There are dog-walking and doggie daycare services in most cities. Perhaps a neighbor or a local retired person could spend some time with the animal.

Cats do not appear to need the same level of social interaction with people that dogs do, but anyone who has had more than one cat knows what a difference



companionship of their own kind makes to a cat.

If you are trying to find a home for a dog:

9. Does your home have a yard and is it completely fenced?

You will want to make sure that the yard is completely fenced, with no gaps, so the dog cannot escape. If the prospective adopters do not have a fenced yard, ask how the dog will be safely monitored while outdoors.

Do not automatically write off prospective adopters if they do not have a fenced yard. Many people who do not have fenced yards (such as apartment dwellers) are that much more conscientious about taking their dogs for walks. Some dogs that have a nice fenced yard are outdoor dogs left to fend for themselves most of the time.

10. Will the dog get regular exercise?

Dogs need to get off their home turf at least once a day to sniff, explore and get some exercise. If the animal you are trying to place is a young, energetic dog, you might want to find out if the prospective adopters are realistic about how much exercise the dog needs. Letting the dog out in the yard a few times a day is often not enough.

If you are trying to find a home for a cat:

11. Will the cat be an indoor or outdoor cat?

Cats that go outside live, on average, for about two to three years. They are vulnerable to traffic accidents, attacks by dogs, and accidental or deliberate poisonings. A cat that stays indoors can live up to 20 years. Cats do very well as indoor pets, but some people like to add a cat enclosure onto the house or screen in a porch so that their cats can enjoy the open air and remain protected.

12. Would you consider declawing a cat?

Declawing in most cases is a cruel and unnecessary procedure. Most people just need to be informed about how to accommodate a cat's need to scratch: getting a scratching post that is the correct height (as tall as the cat when fully extended), clipping the cat's claws regularly and giving the cat lots of toys for play and stimulation.

Meeting the Potential Adopter

Once you have the answers to these questions, you will have a pretty good idea about whether the prospective adopter will provide a good home for the pet you are placing. You will need to use your instincts. The next step is to meet the people, see their home, and introduce the animal.

You have some choices about where to introduce the animal. The prospective adopters could come over to your place, you could take the pet to theirs or you could meet on neutral ground, like a park. We do advise you not to give up the pet until you have checked the home and living situation. But, if the prospective adopters have another dog and you are placing a dog, a park setting could be a good place to arrange a first meeting. Wherever the meeting takes places, you will want to observe closely how they relate to the pet and how the pet relates to them.

Hopefully, you will be as impressed with them in person as you were on the phone. If there are any doubts in your mind, you can either talk to them about your doubts or simply decide not to adopt to them. Do not feel uncomfortable about having doubts – it is fine to be concerned about your pet's well-being and any reasonable person understands this. After all, it is better to be safe than sorry. To make a graceful exit without confrontation, you could mention that there are other people interested in seeing the pet and that you will get back to them.

Finalizing the Adoption

When you give up the animal, collect your adoption fee and remember to hand over any medical and vaccination records and any special food, bowls, toys or bedding. There is a sample medical record in the sample forms part of this guide that you can use as a template if you need to write one up.

Once you have made a match, stay in touch. Call regularly to see how things are going, particularly at the outset. Be careful not to bother the adopters, though. There is a time to let go and allow them to form their own bond with the animal.



Some Final Words of Advice and Encouragement

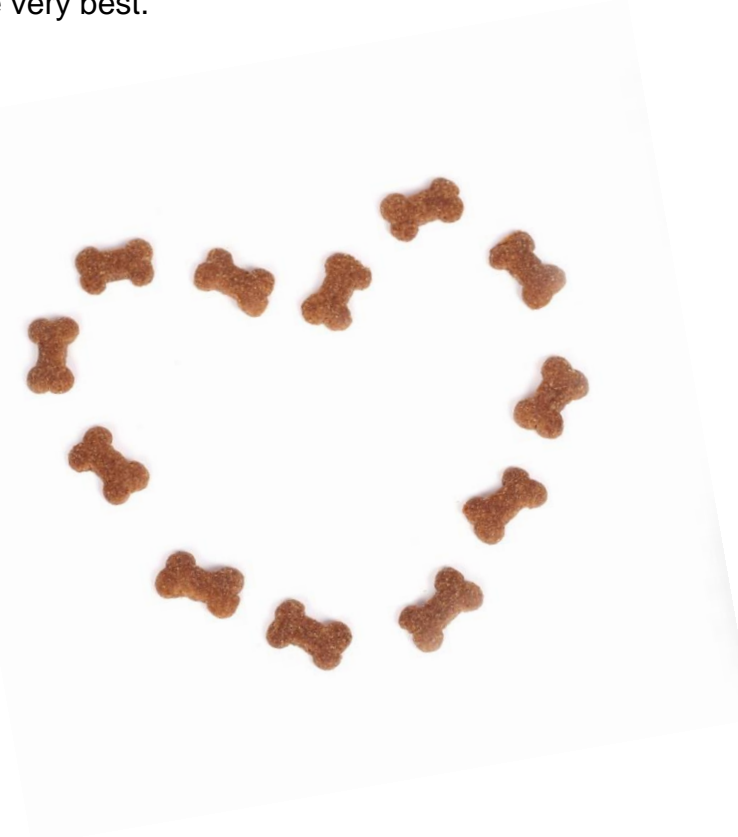
As you go through the process of placing a pet, keep in mind that creativity, persistence, and a positive attitude are usually rewarded. Think about the best possible environment for the pet and explore all of your the options. Try not to get discouraged and do not give up after just one or two interviews. Finding a home can take some work and some time, but if you persevere, you are sure to find a new person for your pet.

If you are trying to place your own pet in a new home, you are this pet's best option for finding a good new home. Since you know the animal, you can provide the most information to prospective adopters and you can best determine the appropriateness of a new home. Please remember that your dog or cat has been a faithful companion to you, so he/she deserves the best new home you can find. You will sleep better knowing that your pet is happy, healthy and safe in a wonderful new home.

Whatever you do, do not abandon your animal. They absolutely do not deserve treatment like this and you, as their owner, have a responsibility to ensure they are somewhere safe.

We hope that the advice in this publication helps you to place your pet or an animal you have rescued. We understand that this may be a difficult and stressful time for you, but we hope you will be patient and give our suggestions time to work.

If you are feeling discouraged, just remember: it can be done. People find new homes for pets every single day. With some effort, creativity and perseverance, you can do it, too. We wish you the very best.



Sample Forms

Sample Medical Record

This is a sample medical record that you can adapt to fit your particular situation.

Pet Information

Name: _____

Type of pet: Dog Cat Other (specify): _____

Pet is spayed/neutered: Yes No

Pet is up to date on vaccinations: Yes No

Pet License # _____ Pet Tattoo #: _____ Pet Microchip #: _____

Pet's physical description (*age, weight, breed, color, special markings, tail or ear type etc.*): _____

General History: _____

Veterinarian

Veterinary Clinic/Veterinarian: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Vaccination History

Date of last rabies vaccination: _____ Tag #: _____

Next rabies vaccination due: _____

Other vaccinations given:

Name: _____ Date Given: _____ Next due date: _____

Name: _____ Date Given: _____ Next due date: _____

Name: _____ Date Given: _____ Next due date: _____

Illnesses, treatments: _____

Other comments _____

Sample Adoption Screener's Worksheet

This is a sample worksheet that you can adapt to fit your particular situation.

Date call received: _____ Date of interview: _____

Name (First/Last): _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Mobile Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

E- mail: _____

Record the prospective adopter's answers to these questions:

1. How did you hear about the pet?
2. What type of animal are you looking for?
3. Who is the animal for?
4. Who will be the primary caregiver?
5. Do you have other pets at home? Yes No
If yes, please tell me about them.

If no, ask: Have you had pets before? What happened to them?

6. Do you have children? Yes No
If yes: How old are they?

7. Do all members of the household know about and want a new animal?

Yes No

If no, please explain:

8. Do you live in a house or an apartment?

9. Do you own your home or are you renting?

If renting, does your lease allow pets? Yes No

10. May I call your landlord? Yes No

Landlord's phone: _____

11. Can I come to your home, to see where the animal will be living?

Yes No

12. How many hours would the animal be alone during the day?

If you're trying to find a home for a dog:

13. Does your home have a yard and is it completely fenced?

14. Will the dog get regular exercise?

If you're trying to find a home for a cat:

15. Will the cat be an indoor or outdoor cat?

16. Would you consider declawing a cat? Yes No

After the interview, record your impressions:

17. Does the prospective adopter seem responsible?

18. Does the prospective adopter seem flexible and compassionate?

19. What is your general impression of this person?

20. Any doubts that this will be a good home?