

an animal.

As you know, it is necessary to "put to sleep" animals at a shelter who are not adopted. A humane death is far better than a cruel, slow death by disease, exposure, starvation, or being crushed under the wheels of a car and better than a life made hellish by negligence or cruelty. A peaceful end is certainly preferable to the lives so many animals lead—tied to the end of a chain or kept continually in a garage or basement where fresh air, proper food, clean water, exercise, regular health care, companionship, respect, and love are in short supply.

### WARNING!

There are people who acquire animals for laboratories or to sell as guard or attack dogs. These individuals often pretend to seek animals as family companions and bring children or senior citizens with them to gain your confidence. Don't think it can't happen to you. Always ask for identification (legitimate callers will not object when you tell them why). Write down the person's full name, driver's license number, address, and telephone number and explain that you will visit his or her home (to ensure that s/he actually lives there). Ask for (and check) references from veterinarians, neighbors, and employers.

Most importantly, if you are advertising your animal in the newspaper, never say, "Free to a good home," the five favorite words of "bunchers" (dealers who sell animals to laboratories). Before taking out any newspaper ad, consider putting up photos and ads at veterinary offices and animal supply stores and hooking up with local animal rescue groups. Names of rescue groups are usually available from the local shelter. To find purebred rescue groups near you, look in the Project BREED (Breed Rescue Efforts and Education Directory)

directory at your local library, or order a copy from the Network for Ani-males & Females, Inc. (P.O. Box 15888, Chevy Chase, MD 20825-5888. The set is \$35, plus \$5.05 for postage/handling, check or money order).

### ADOPTION CHECKLIST

- Visit the prospective adopter's home. Ask to meet the other members of the family and observe their reactions to the animal. Be wary of the parent who says, "Johnny will be responsible for the dog," since this could mean that no one will provide regular care or the animal will be given away when Johnny loses interest. Never feel pressured to leave the animal there!
- Make sure the adopter understands the basics of responsible animal care, including ID tags, veterinary care, leashes, and fences for dogs. Stipulations, such as spaying or neutering, need to be put in writing and signed by the adopter (see enclosed sample agreement).
- Ask for a nominal adoption fee. This will discourage people who sell animals for experiments, as well as those who may not be willing to make a serious commitment to care for the animal. Honest, responsible individuals looking for a companion should be willing to pay a small fee, especially if you explain why.
- Don't hand over your animal until you are completely satisfied. If you have any doubts about the adopter or the potential new home, or if the situation feels wrong in any way, don't be afraid to say "no" or "let me think about it"—your animal friend's happiness and life depend on it.
- To ease the transition, send along the animal's toys, leashes, collars, harnesses, scratching posts, and carriers. Books and leaflets on

animal care are also helpful.

- Leave your name, address, and home and work phone numbers, and urge adopters to call if they have any questions or problems. After the adoption, make at least one unannounced trip to the new home to make sure the animal is happy and well cared for.

### SECURITY

Be sure the animal is wearing a collar and an I.D. tag with your number and the number of the new owner. Write the owner's name, phone number, and address on the outside of the collar in indelible ink. Tattooing or micro-chipping your animal before release can also help protect the animal and ensure recovery in the event s/he is ever lost or stolen. Advise the new owner not to leave the animal unattended at first; a sense of belonging takes time to develop. A dog who has never before chewed a rug, jumped over or dug under a fence, or urinated indoors may do so in strange surroundings or when stressed or pining.

### PROVIDING FOR YOUR COMPANION ANIMAL IN CASE OF YOUR DEATH

You can ensure that your companion animal will be provided for after your death by naming a caretaker in your will. Set aside money for the animal's care in a trust fund or make a direct bequest to the caregiver. If you can't find a friend or relative you can trust, you might ask a local charitable organization with acceptable standards to adopt your animal or to place him or her in a good home. Make sure you leave the

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*Finding The*

**RIGHT HOME**

*For Your Companion Animal*

**PETA**

PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

*You care about your companion animal and you want to find him or her a good home. But remember, not every inquirer will share your understanding and concerns. This pamphlet will provide the information you need to select a good home and help ensure that the animal you place will still be cared for next year and even 10 years from now.*

## BEFORE YOU MAKE THAT BIG DECISION . . .

Are you reluctant to part with an old friend but feel you have no choice? Be sure you explore all your options before taking that big step. Once an animal leaves your care, can you be absolutely certain s/he will be safe and treated well for the rest of his or her life?

- If your animal friend is having behavior problems, consult a veterinarian first to make sure illness isn't the root cause. If s/he is given a clean bill of health, try a behaviorist or humane trainer. Don't hesitate to call local humane groups or PETA for advice!
- Having financial difficulties or traveling for an extended period of time? Ask a family member or trusted friend to care for your animal temporarily. Also, humane and breed rescue groups may agree to foster your friend.
- Having trouble finding an apartment that allows animals? Try networking through local humane societies and animal rights groups. Post ads in veterinarians' offices, companion animal supply stores, and health food stores. If you are threatened with eviction over a companion animal, the Animal Legal Defense Fund (1363 Lincoln Ave., San Rafael, CA 94901; 415-459-0885) may be able to help.

## SCREENING:

The following questions are designed to give you necessary information about a potential adopter's attitude and level of responsibility.

### *"Why do you want a dog (or cat)?"*

Look for someone who wants an animal to be part of the family as a household companion. Beware of people seeking a large dog for guarding purposes (guard dogs are often neglected and then discarded when their "usefulness" is over) or someone wanting a dog for breeding. If someone wants an animal as a gift for a friend or relative, insist that the person who will spend the next decade or more with the dog or cat be involved in the selection. If a child calls, ask to speak with his or her parents.

### *"Have you had animals before? What happened to them?"*

People who have never had animals before should be advised of the considerable expense and responsibility involved in caring for them, including exercise, feed bills, and veterinary costs. Someone who has had several animals stolen, killed by cars, lost, or given away is undoubtedly a poor prospect.

### *"Is someone home during the day?"*

Animals accustomed to companionship may become frantic and even destructive if left alone for long periods. Also, puppies need to be fed three to four times daily and need careful attention during housebreaking. Even adult dogs should not be required to "hold it" all day until someone comes home from work to let them out. Decide if this animal will suit the prospective owner's lifestyle.

### *"If you move or travel, what will happen?"*

Caring for an animal is a 10- to 15-year

commitment. Remind prospects that they will have to make arrangements for someone to care for the animal during vacations and must plan for the animal's needs if contemplating a move. Ask what arrangements will be made in those circumstances.

### *(For dogs) "Is your yard fenced?"*

A well-fenced yard is advisable. People without an enclosed yard might allow a dog to run loose, which is illegal and very dangerous, or chain him/her up—a frustrating, desolate existence.

### *"Where will you keep the animal?"*

Be wary of people who talk about having a dog live or sleep on the back porch, in a dog house, in the garage, or in the basement. These people are probably not interested in making the animal a household companion.

### *"How do you feel about spaying/neutering?"*

More than 20 million animals are destroyed each year because there are simply not enough homes to go around. Always require that the prospective owner pay to spay or neuter before adoption to avoid further breeding, resulting in more homeless animals. (Veterinarians now believe that puppies and kittens can be spayed when they are eight weeks old.) If you or the prospect are concerned about neutering costs, call your local humane organization to find out about reduced fee programs. Be cautious if people already have an unaltered animal in their home: They may have breeding in mind.

### *"Do you own or rent your home?"*

If the prospect does not own, see if his or her lease permits animals. Thousands of animals are "given up" each year after being discovered by

the owner of the property.

### *"Who else lives in your home?"*

Make certain all other members of the household want a companion animal and are aware of the caller's plans. Also, determine the ages of any children in the household. Families with young children should be told that normal puppy play behavior often includes jumping and biting and that puppies and cats must be protected from rambunctious children.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO FIND THAT "GOOD HOME"

Please don't rush into a placement because you are pressured by time. If you are unable to find an excellent home for your animal, take him or her to an animal shelter operated by a humane organization. Choose a shelter that (a) checks out prospective homes carefully by doing home checks; (b) requires spaying or neutering; (c) does not give or sell animals to research institutions or guard dog companies; and (d) if euthanasia becomes necessary, uses a painless sodium pentobarbital injection intravenously (just as good veterinarians do).

If your animal friend is old, very shy, or dependent on you, and you cannot find a home with someone s/he trusts and loves, the kindest course may lie in taking him or her to a veterinarian or shelter to be euthanized. Animals who have been with you a long time may suffer and pine terribly when you are gone. As a final kindness, remain in the room to comfort your old friend during euthanasia.

Never sell or give your animal to a pet shop. Persons operating pet shops are concerned with running a profit-making business and often have little or no concern about what happens to the animals after they leave the store. Without a thorough screening process, animals are sold to people buying on impulse and to people who are unfit to care for

organization enough money to care for your animal for the rest of his or her life.

### COMPANION ANIMAL SAMPLE ADOPTION AGREEMENT

This animal's known behavior and medical history have been discussed with me. The animal will receive all the care and attention necessary to ensure his/her health and well-being. S/he will not be abused in any manner and will live indoors. This animal will not be declawed or have any cosmetic surgery done such as tail or ear docking. I agree to provide a buckle collar with an identification tag and to obey leash laws. I understand the animal must be spayed/neutered by:

\_\_\_\_\_, 199\_\_\_\_.

I understand that the person adopting out the animal or his/her representative may visit my home without giving advance notice. If at any time the person adopting out the animal determines that the terms and conditions of this agreement have not been met or that the animal is not receiving proper and humane care, that person may take custody of the animal.

If at any time I cannot keep the animal, the animal will be returned to the person adopting out the animal, or to a proper and humanely run animal shelter. Under no circumstances will the animal be abandoned, sold, or given away for experimentation or guarding purposes.

I certify that the following information is correct and authorize the person adopting out the animal to check my references.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

CONTINUED ON REVERSE SIDE

Home phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Employer's address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Employer's phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Driver's license number (incl. state & exp. date)

\_\_\_\_\_

Veterinary reference \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Adopter's signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Current guardian's signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_