

When many owners can no longer care for a pet, or when their pet has had a litter, many of these owner's place ads on Facebook or Craigslist, in newspapers, or on flyers advertising these unwanted pets as "free to a good home". While these owners mean well & some free pets end up in wonderful homes, we still strongly advise against this approach as "free" is all too often seen as "worthless."

Studies show that pets obtained for free are less likely to ever be taken to a veterinarian for basic immunizations and checkups, let alone and illness or injury, and even less likely to be spayed or neutered eventually leading to even more unwanted puppies and kittens. Free pets are also more likely to be abused and/or discarded because "there are plenty more where that one came from!" Since we ask about the original source of a pet when they are brought to us we can say that well over 90% of the owner surrendered pets were originally obtained as "free to a good home" pet. And of those free pets surrendered to us, easily 75% or more of those have never been taken to a Veterinarian for even the most basic of care.

And while this is not intended to scare or offend, there are some harsh realities of what has been known to happen to "free" pets. There are those who get a puppy for their children or grandchildren and then when it is say six-months to a year old they 'get rid of it' and later on get another puppy or kitten for the "children" to play with until it too outgrows its cuteness. Small puppies and kittens can be used as snake or other predator food. Some horrible people will purposely get a free animal for purposes of torturing it or using it in some bad-taste prank. There are people who buy, steal or get free animals for the purpose of 'flipping' them to anyone for a few bucks, use for breeding stock, or to be used as bait dogs by dog fighters.

So what should you do if you need to re-home your pet? If your pet came from a responsible breeder, call them to see if they can take it back or assist with placement as a truly responsible breeder will be there for the animal they produced. You should consider charging a fee that will not only 'value' your pet but discourage resale of pets to others. Spay or neuter your pet to avoid attracting backyard breeders or puppy mill operators. Interview potential new owners by asking for their identification, phone number, previous pet experience, their current pets and children in the household, how the pet will be contained, and their veterinarian's name as a reference. Keep their contact info, call their veterinarian for a reference and if at all possible, visit their home to see how and where your pet will live before your release it to the new owner. For the puppies or kittens, or if you can not afford to have your pet spayed or neutered, ask the new owner to pledge that they will have the puppy/kitten fixed by the time it is six months old and the adult immediately. If a potential adopter isn't willing to give you their information or let you visit their home our advice is to politely send them away empty handed. You owe it to your pet to take the time and effort to make sure it goes to a good home.

There is a new on-line service to assist you in rehoming a pet being provided by Adopt-A-Pet.com and The Petco Foundation titled '[Rehome](#).' This site will guide you through posting your pet, using the on-line application process, screening potential adopters, choosing a safe meeting place and finalizing an adoption. As the owner you will also designate your chosen shelter or rescue to receive the 'adoption fee' from the adopter so that your pet in need not only finds the new home it needs, but a shelter pet benefits as well. There are also tools on this site to help you figure out how to keep your own pet as that would be the best solution of all.

If time is critical or you are simply not willing to screen potential owners, then please take your pet to a reputable public or private shelter rather than give it away free to someone you don't know anything about. Reputable shelters work very hard to screen & educate adopters to make sure they are appropriate and ready to take on a new pet so that it hopefully never needs to be rehomed again.