

# Pet Adoption Guidelines

***Don't focus on purebred animals.*** The appearance of being a purebred is no indication that the animal is mentally or physically superior to the mixed breed. The value of shelter animals is tied directly to the dog's capacity to become a loving member of your family. Mixed breed dogs are equally likely to be love sponges and they have one attribute that purebreds do not-MUTTS ARE ONE-OF-A-KIND.

***Be cautious about taking an animal that appears fearful or shy, even if the animal is more outgoing when taken to a private adoption area.*** The safest animal to select is one that is comfortable amidst the din of the kennel and in a quiet area.

***Avoid taking an animal that has an obvious physical or behavioral problem.*** If you opt for an animal with a physical or behavioral deficit, make a phone call to your veterinarian or a behaviorist to make sure that the pet's problem is not insurmountable.

***There is a misconception that by taking a "less adoptable" animal, someone else will surely take the "more adoptable" animal home.*** There are only so many adoptions that are going to take place, and there are far more animals than there are good homes in which to place them. If you take an animal that is unattractive, ill or older to save a life, there is a perfectly, healthy, attractive, well behaved animal that will be euthanized.

***Try to find an animal that is interested in all of the people passing by the cage, not just you.*** Many animals display such behavior when they see someone who resembles their original owner, the very person who may have brought the animal to the shelter. Your resemblance may cause an instant rapport, but it may also trigger the same unacceptable behaviors that caused the original owner to give it up.

***Occasionally, a potential adopter will see an animal on its way into the shelter and decide to circumvent the shelter process.*** While there is no law that prevents you from merely taking the animal from its owner, please be aware that you are accepting a real risk. The owner would dearly love to hand the animal over to you rather than surrender it to a shelter. If the owner is less than truthful about the animal's temperament or health, you have just volunteered to accept responsibility for any potential problems.

***Adopting a pet from a shelter is an important decision and should be given all the consideration that any serious decision deserves.*** A few simple precautions and common sense will help ensure that you select an animal that can become a happy family member for years to come. Remember, pet owners who release their animals to a shelter are not universally "bad" people. They are often forced to give up the animal due to unanticipated and unavoidable circumstances. The animal may be a wonderful creature that had the bad fortune to live with an irresponsible owner, or when the owner is confronted with the possibility that the animal could be destroyed, they may not be completely truthful about the animal's behavior.

***When you handle the animal, make sure a shelter worker or volunteer assists you.*** Watch the way the animal reacts to the brisk and efficient movements of the staff member. Look for any signs that the animal is hand shy or skittish. Any signs of aggression should instantly rule out the animal.

***Be willing to walk out the door if you do not find exactly the animal that is right for you.*** The advantage of an animal shelter is that it has a high volume of animals. Over a period of time you will have the opportunity to see many animals before you make your decision.