

This is the time of year when social media and bulletin boards everywhere are full of “Free to a good home” postings. Most of these are for litters of ‘surprise/unwanted’ puppies and kittens (why spay/neuter needs to be a first priority with a new pet). And while we know that some of these pets do find loving homes, we also know that large numbers of these end up given away many times over or end up in a Shelter somewhere. From our intake statistics, easily 90+% of owner surrendered pets to us were obtained “free” and the vast majority of those have had little to no Veterinary care of any kind. While there are, of course, wonderful families who do everything right by their free pet, reality is that ‘free’ pets are less likely to ever be taken to a veterinarian for basic immunizations and checkups, let alone an 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 neglected and/or discarded because "there are plenty more where that one came from!"

And sadly, not all people who get these free pets have the best intentions no matter how nice they may seem at that one short meetup. For some, these puppies or kittens are just summer ‘toys’ for the kids/grandkids and will be discarded at the end of the summer. Some people’s pets simply don’t last/live very long so they just go and get another freebie. Some may get them to ‘flip’ them for a few bucks to anyone for any reason. And there are other, hopefully rare, but real and far worse fates that we will just not go into here, but suffice that the solution to all of this is to NOT let your pet have yet another unneeded litter or to do your homework before taking on a pet so you don’t have any need to rehome it.

So what to 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 BEFORE rehoming it to avoid yet another accidental litter or make it unattractive to 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 you release it to the new owner. If you cannot 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.

If time is critical or you are simply not willing to screen potential owners, then please take your pet to a reputable shelter rather than give it away free to someone you know nothing about. Shelters work hard to find adoptable pets loving & lifetime homes. We work to screen & educate adopters to make sure they are ready to take on a new pet. And our adoption pets are immunized, treated for all parasites, spayed or neutered and microchipped!

AND, if you take home a new Shelter Pet and it does not work out for most any reason, we WILL take our adopted pet back. We actually have it in our Adoption Contract language to protect our pet. We committed to it once, so once back with us will do so again.

Best way to ignore everything above? Do your homework before getting a pet, plan for a 15-20 year commitment and have your pet spayed or neutered BEFORE it has/causes an unwanted litter. And if a stray dog or cat shows up that you end up ‘keeping,’ then get it to your Veterinarian ASAP for vaccinations and a checkup and have it spayed or neutered without delay to prevent yet another unwanted litter.