

A SAFE SHELTER



ROANOKE
VALLEY **SPCA**

REHOMING GUIDE

AND SUPPORT INFORMATION

Dear Pet Guardian,

We understand that rehoming a pet is never easy. Before making the final decision to rehome a pet, please take a look at the Rehoming Issue and Solution Boards on the following two pages. These boards offer guidance and solutions to common challenges that cause the need for a pet to be rehomed. Often the reasons for rehoming are based on animal behavior, medical expenses, or general costs of care. The Roanoke Valley SPCA provides a variety of pet support resources that may be able to ease the stress and circumstances that threaten to divide your family including information and financial assistance for training, behavioral and medical care, and pet food. If behavioral, residential, or financial barriers prevent you from keeping your pet, please contact our Programs Manager at 540-339-9506 or email petsupport@rvspca.org to discuss interventions and resources available.

We also know that on occasion, these resources and solutions will not be sufficient to keep an animal in his or her current home and rehoming your pet is truly the best or only option. We are very sorry to hear that you must find a new home for your companion. As this is an incredibly difficult decision, we hope to give you as much information as we can to allow you to make an informed choice that takes into account your needs, the needs of your companion, and various resource limitations. We will do everything we can to assist you in this process.

It is always preferable to try and place your companion animal directly into a new home rather than surrendering your pet to any facility. Many of the resources we offer are online services. If you do not have access to the internet, you may want to ask a friend to help you. In addition, your local library will have free internet access and people there to assist you, and you can always give us call. You are truly your pet's best option for finding a new home. You'll be able to provide the most information on your pet to prospective adopters as well as best determine the suitability of a new home. There are good homes out there! It's just a matter of finding them.

The Roanoke Valley SPCA is a private, limited-admission nonprofit shelter. We do not euthanize for space, nor do we exceed our capacity for care. Space is limited. Every dog and cat adopted from our shelter opens up a place for another pet needing our help. Like most shelters across the nation, intake of a dog or cat is by appointment only. While inconvenient, this is one of the many things that allow us to remain a "no-kill" shelter. Additionally, we are only able to take animals from their legal owners. Stray pets should be taken to your public animal shelter (municipal pound) to give the owner the ability to find their pet. Just like shelters for humans, animal shelters should only be places of last resort, so we encourage pet guardians to seek out other solutions whenever possible.

Sincerely,
Roanoke Valley SPCA Staff

Before You Rehome Your Pet

Deciding to rehome your pet is a tough decision and we want to be sure you are aware that the Roanoke Valley SPCA offers several services to solve some of the issues you may be experiencing. It is our goal to help keep pets in their loving homes.

C.A.Re Fund (Companion Animal Relief) – Assists families with high vet bills.

P.E.T. Program (Pets Eat Too) – Supplies dog and cat food to several food pantries and walk-in requests for food assistance.

Dot's Drive-Thru – The 2nd Sunday of each month, we help families in need of support, the opportunity to pick up food and litter for their furry friends.

Community Cat Crew – Supplies food, information, traps and spay/neuter support for the community cat colonies in the area.

Behavior Support – Our trained staff will provide the information or referrals you need to resolve basic behavior issues.

Judith Goins Behavior Assistance Program – Provides resources for pets struggling with behavior issues.

Temporary/Transitional Fostering – If you are experiencing a short term crisis such as surgery, rehab or homelessness we will work with you to find a short term foster for your beloved pet while you get back on your feet. This is typically less than six weeks.

Other Resources – Comprehensive lists of local Veterinary Clinics, Boarding Facilities, Recommended Behavior Partners and National organizations offering Medical Support through individual grants.

For more information on our programs or to request assistance, contact our Program Manager at 540-339-9506 or email petsupport@rvspca.org

Finding a Home for Your Pet

The best place for your pet is in your home until a new home has been found. Just like a job interview, putting your pet's best paw forward is very important.

Rehoming your pet is not abandonment; in fact, it's humane, mature, and responsible.

Prepare the animal for adoption. To increase the chances of finding a home and the success of the new placement, it is important that the pet is:

- Spayed or neutered
- In good health and up-to-date on vaccinations
- Clean and groomed
- House-trained and reasonably well-behaved

If your pet isn't spayed or neutered, have it done. We don't recommend placing an animal who has not been spayed/neutered into a new home. Doing so can result in unwanted litters, and neutered animals are less likely to show undesirable mating behaviors, such as mounting or howling. Puppies and kittens as young as eight weeks old can be spayed/neutered. For more information, talk to your veterinarian.

If you need to find a veterinarian, the Roanoke Valley SPCA has a comprehensive list of local veterinary clinics as well as the mobile unit operated through our sister organization, Mountain View Humane, in Christiansburg. The mobile clinic travels to various areas to offer low-cost services to members of our community. **To find out dates and locations for the mobile clinic or to book an appointment at their brick and mortar clinic call 540-382-0222.**

Rehoming Service

The Roanoke Valley SPCA offers Rehoming Service for people in our community to find the right home for their pet(s).

To rehome your pet on our website, our Program Manager will send you a link to the submission form. Upon completion and submission of the form, the approval process begins.

Pets listed on our Rehoming site **must** be spayed or neutered and up-to-date on his or her Rabies vaccine. This requirement will also make finding a new home for your pet easier. Please remember that finding a loving home for your pet is not usually an overnight process, and it may take some time.

Pet Photos

A photo helps create a connection with a potential adopter. Descriptions are important, but it's the picture, more specifically the eyes and expression, that are going to grab someone's attention first. You can use your cell phone camera to take great pictures of your pet with these simple strategies:

- For both online and printed, color is best.
- Backgrounds should be simple and in contrast to the animal's coloring (i.e. dark color background for a light colored animal)
- You can have a person holding or petting the animal to capture scale
- Animal should be in a calm or relaxed state
- Focus on the eyes and head, these features should take up a third of the photo (if a confirmation picture is needed, you can add a second picture)
- Take many photos and from different angles, then choose the very best ones. Chose the best picture to represent your pet for the Rehoming website. (Other rehoming sites may allow you to upload more photos.)

Pet Profile/Biography

Before starting to write your pet profile or bio, make a complete list of what you would consider your pet's best qualities and what you think will make the ideal home. Once you are done, go back and pick out the non-negotiable items for your pet's unique needs. This will help you with mentioning the most important details in your description and in eventually choosing the right home. Remember you are writing your pet's story and should have the pet's basic characteristics like breed, size, gender, age and appearance; it should also highlight your pet's personality, likes and dislikes, and the little things that make him/her special. Do not hold back when it comes to telling about disabilities, health issues, behavior quirks or limitations (i.e. not good with cats or small children). If you do

not share the less appealing aspects, you are setting up your pet for failure. Sometimes these are in fact the very things that particularly speak to a potential adopter.

Now that you have engaging photos and a story for your pet, complete the Roanoke Valley SPCA Rehoming Submission Form. Approval of your submission may take up to 72 hours. The listing will remain on the website for 45 days. Please notify us if you find a home for your pet so we can remove it from the site. If you need assistance or need to repost the listing, contact the Programs Manager at petsupport@rvspca.org or 540-339-9506.

Don't Stop Here, Advertise Widely

Now that you have posted your pet on our website, there are more ways to get your pet out there for potential adopters to see.

National Rehoming Websites have great resources and recommendations for people wishing to rehome their pets including flyers, contracts and how-to's. Here is a short list of adoption websites you may want to use:

- rehome.adoptapet.com
- rescueme.org
- getyourpet.com
- Posting flyers with the photo and description you've created is inexpensive and often highly effective in getting the word out. A free and easy to use flyer making program is available on the website <http://petbond.com/>. Place flyers throughout the community and especially in places that match your animal's needs. For example, if you were trying to rehome a working dog, placing flyers at farm supply stores could potentially attract the right adopter.
- Other places to post flyers:
 - » Veterinary hospitals
 - » Retail/Grocery store community boards
 - » Employee Break Rooms
 - » Dog Parks
 - » Library and church community boards

Talk to Your Friends

Word of mouth should never be underestimated. Tell everyone about your pet who needs a home. You never know who is going to be interested.

- Use community and social media contacts. Ask your church to mention the animal in their church newsletter. If you or someone you know works in an office or at a school or university, ask to send an office wide email. Post about your animal on all your social media outlets and ask your friends and family to share the post.
- Get the pet out there! (This works especially well with dogs.) The more your pet interacts with people the more likely he'll charm the right person. Take your pet on walks, go to pet supply stores, the local park, anywhere your dog is allowed and might meet the right person. Wearing a bandana or a sign that says "Adopt me" or "Looking for a New Home" will also help.

Remember, Be Creative and Persistent

There are many animals needing homes at any one time, so finding a home can take some work. But, there are good homes out there, so try to maintain a positive attitude. Explore all options you can think of for finding a home - creativity and persistence are usually rewarded.

Remind yourself that you are this pet's best option for finding a new home. You might think shelters or rescue groups would be more adept at placing the pet because we have experience, facilities, screening guidelines, etc. But, an individual, particularly one who knows the animal, can focus all his or her efforts on that pet, provide the most information to prospective adopters, and best determine the appropriateness of a new home. Also, any shelter or sanctuary is stressful for an animal. The shelter setting, no matter how nice, can bring on stress-related problems. Anxiety, aggression, and even illness are common and these natural reactions may make adoption difficult or impossible.

About Potential Adopters

If someone expresses interest in adopting, try to hold a brief interview over the phone before introducing them to your pet. Using a set of screening questions will efficiently eliminate inappropriate or inadequate homes.

If possible, try to have a few meetings with the potential adopter. This will make the transition easier. After the adopter has signed the contract and taken their new family member home, stay in touch, at least until you are certain a new bond is created and all seems well.

Tips for Evaluating Potential Adopters

It is important to make a great match for both your dog or cat and his future adoptive family. With this in mind, share any health concerns, without delay, such as medications, allergies, and diet. Also, discuss his energy, unique behaviors, and personal tendencies so there's no surprises.

Possible Questions to Ask:

- What is a typical day like in your home?
- Do you rent or do you own?
- Do you have other pets?
- Are those pets spayed or neutered?
- Are their children in your family?
- How many hours a day will the dog or cat be left alone?
- How do you plan to provide walks or daily stimulation?

Tips for Introducing Dogs

The Humane Society of the United States has some great information on introducing dogs to each other. For the full article, check out:

<https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/introducing-new-dogs>

Introduce on neutral territory.

- * It's best to let dogs become familiar with each other on neutral territory: outdoors. Each dog should be walked separately on a leash, and each walker should have a bag of high-value treats or food broken into small pieces. At first, walk the dogs at a distance where they can see each other but are not too provoked by each other's presence. If the dogs are not showing any negative behaviors, reward them with treats just for seeing each other. For example, when the dog you're walking looks at the other dog, you can say "Good boy!" in a happy, friendly voice and give him a treat. Repeat often.

Pay attention to each dog's body language.

- * Watch carefully for body postures that indicate a defensive or wary response, including hair standing up on the dog's back, teeth baring, growling, a stiff-legged gait or a prolonged stare. If you see such postures, either when the dogs are at a distance or near each other, immediately and calmly interrupt the interaction by interesting the dog in something else. If the dogs seem relaxed and comfortable, you can shorten the distance between them. Again, offer treats to the dogs any time they look at each other in a relaxed manner.

Let the dogs determine the pace of the introduction.

- * It's possible that the dogs will just want to play with each other by the middle of the walk. It's also possible that it will take more time before the dogs are comfortable enough to walk side by side. The most important thing is to take this introduction slowly. The more patient you are, the better your chance of success. Do not force the dogs to interact.
- * Once the dogs are able to view each other at a close proximity, allow one dog to walk behind the other, and then switch. If the dogs remain comfortable, allow them to walk side by side. Finally, let the dogs interact under close supervision. If one or both dogs show any signs of stress or agitation, proceed more slowly with the introduction.

Monitor closely in the home.

- * When first introducing the dogs in the home, use a sturdy, tall baby gate to separate them. Observe how they interact through the gate. Reinforce positive behavior by providing high-value treats to the dogs for positive interactions.
- * Make sure that there are no toys, food or treats left around the home that the dogs could potentially fight over. Also, be aware of situations that could lead to conflict—for example, when the dogs get overly excited. Closely monitor the dogs when they are together, rewarding them with treats, until you are 100% confident they are comfortable and safe with each other.

For help with introductions that don't seem to be going well, contact a professional trainer or animal behaviorist.

When You Have Found the Right Home for Your Pet with a Responsible New Family:

- Arrange a drop off meeting. Public meeting places are recommended. Pet Stores allow pets in the store and are a good place to meet. Vinton Police Department allows meetings in their parking lot that is monitored by camera.
- To make your pet's transition easier, send your pet's favorite toys, bedding, litter box or other familiar items. Don't forget to let the new owner know what your pet is eating or bring some of the remaining food to allow for transitioning to a new food if necessary. Cats are often picky about their litter, let the new owner know what type of litter you use.
- Create a written document outlining the agreement you have with the new owner. There are some examples attached.
- Provide vet records to the new owner or ask your veterinarian to send records directly to the new owner's veterinary clinic.
- Update microchip information by contacting the database where the chip is registered to notify the company of the change of ownership and provide the new owner's information.
- If adopted from a shelter previously, contact the shelter and provide them with the new owner information.

Rehoming your pet home to home is recommended because it keeps the pet out of the shelter and allows us to help another pet in need. Have questions or concerns? Contact our Programs Manager at 540-339-9506 or petsupport@rvspca.org.