

Those darn dog rescues with all of their rules and questions - what gives?

Penny Eims – Dog News Examiner

If you have tried to adopt a dog, you know what I'm talking about. Dog Rescues - so many in-depth, personal questions; just to adopt a dog! For goodness sake - do they really need all of that information?

After all - aren't these homeless dogs? Wouldn't *any* owner be better than being a dog, lamenting in rescue? Than being homeless??

Nope - as a matter of fact, those questions and in-depth applications have a purpose. The individuals who run these rescues have seen quite a bit of dog stuff in their day. They have seen the circumstances that brought these dogs into rescue in the first place.

There are a few "real" cases where a dog needs the help of a rescue because the owner has died or fallen gravely ill, but the majority of dogs in rescues are there because they had owners who did things all wrong.

So, why does the application ask the names and ages of those in the household? Because they need to know if there are kids in the house that might be at risk if an inappropriate dog is placed in the home.

Why does the application ask you where the dog will be at night, or while you are away? Because many of the dogs in rescue are there because a prior owner had to get rid of them after neighbors complained about constant barking.

Why does the dog rescue care about training? Really, if it is your dog, shouldn't training (or not training) be your decision? Nope. Many of the dogs in rescues are there because nobody took the time to train them.

The dogs become unruly, hard to own and guess what? Dumped at a shelter or in a rescue. The dogs become somebody else's problem. Unfortunately, at that point, they are often out of control and require considerable work to even become adoptable.

Why should the rescue know about your prior dog-ownership? Is it really their business? Yep. If you had a couple of dogs that you got rid of after they peed in the house, or because you were having a baby, or god forbid - moving, the rescue needs to know.

You see, rescues would not function if dogs were not re-homed. There would be no need for organizations to exist if all owners kept their dogs, no matter what. If all owners altered their dogs and prevented unwanted litters of puppies. If all owners kept their dogs safely indoors, instead of out in a kennel or yard where they might bark, or even get out of a yard and possibly injure someone or something.

The questions on the application (and if you're lucky enough to get that far, those asked of you in a phone interview) have been designed to weed out the bad owners. Is the system perfect? No. Nothing is perfect. However, the situations that the rescue organizations have encountered through the years has given them a pretty good idea of what to ask in order to find exceptional homes for the dogs.

Why are exceptional homes needed? So these dogs do not end up without an owner again. So the dogs don't end up at a shelter where they might be euthanized. The rescues aren't able to take in every dog that needs a place to go. Too many dogs are in danger at the shelters.

So the next time you are looking to adopt, be prepared to complete a lengthy adoption application and to spend some time chatting on the phone with a volunteer. Don't be offended or annoyed - be thankful that those rescue-minded individuals care enough about the dogs in their care to ask the questions that need to be asked.

Rescue organizations find some phenomenal homes - amazing people are out there. That being said, so many of the dogs in rescue are amazing too. They are worth the time and effort and they deserve the exceptional home. They deserve a home that will keep them until the end of their days.

And a final note - a bad owner is not better than getting a dog "out" of rescue. Getting out of rescue, only to be left in a kennel for 10 hours a day or chained in a yard is not better than sitting in rescue. Those "sitting" dogs will eventually get adopted and the new owner will not be keeping them in a bad situation.

Please adopt. Please alter your pets. Please own responsibly.

Penny Eims, a lifelong animal lover, has dedicated the past 4 years to a large, non-profit dog rescue in Washington. Her experiences include fostering, writing web content, creating dog biographies, pet memorials and contributing to rescue newsletters.