



How to Identify a Reputable Animal Rescue or Shelter

By Christy Cole

Whether you adopt, volunteer, or donate, selecting the right organization is important. Not only to be sure you will have the right support after adoption - with a lower likelihood of taking home an animal that has major health and/or behavioral problems, but as important, you won't inadvertently contribute to the mistreatment and abuse of animals.

In your search to find your new furry family member, knowing about the rescue you adopt from will help you find the best match for you. A reputable animal rescue or shelter should tick these boxes:

Nonprofit Status

It should be registered as a 501c3 Nonprofit (unless it is a county shelter), and be in good standing. This can be checked by using this www.apps.irs.gov/app/eos.

Veterinary Care

It should be able to provide complete veterinary records that show, at a minimum, that the dog has received, from a veterinarian, an examination, spay/neuter, microchip, shots (Rabies, DAPP, Bordetella), and treatment for any issues.

Traditionally, dogs recover from health issues prior to adoption. However, if you and the organization come to a fully transparent agreement that allows you to complete treatment, that is a-ok.

Behavior Care

The group should be able to explain how they behaviorally evaluate the dogs at intake and while in their care. They should not adopt out dangerous aggressive animals, or animals that have a bite history without professional reasoning.

If an animal is behaviorally medicated, the organization should be fully transparent as to why, and should provide you with the right resources. There should also be a reliable evaluation or notes on the dog about its behavior when off medication. Dogs should never be behaviorally medicated for the purpose of long-term kenneling.

Partnerships

While new organizations may still be building their partnerships,

established organizations should be able to show proof of local and national partnerships and referrals. Examples include their veterinary partners (this one is a must), Best Friends, Petsmart Charities, the local county, etc.

Specific to Arizona, PACC911.org is a reputable organization that aggregates about 150 reputable local rescues into its group. A PACC911 membership signifies a rescue you can trust. These rescues have 501c3 status, and carry insurance. They agree to a code of conduct and lose their membership if multiple complaints are filed against them. If a rescue is not a "Member" or "Friend" on the PACC911.org website, you can inquire with both the organization and PACC911.org on why that may be. There are quality rescues who are not PACC911 members, you can use this check list to help make that determination.

Insurance

Organizations should carry insurance. Typically, this includes a \$1,000,000 liability insurance policy to cover everything dog-related: events, transports, volunteers, volunteer property, and dog bites (This may not impact you directly, but it indicates a reputable organization.)

Online Reviews

In the world of animal rescue, most organizations will have a couple of angry clients or contacts. However, the majority of online and Facebook reviews should always be positive.

Facilities

Some rescues do not have a facility as it may not be ideal for their dogs, or may not be part of their mission. There is no problem with that. When an organization does have a facility, the shelter should be clean and organized, with animals appearing fed and healthy. If you are not

allowed to see the facility, that is a red flag.

Sick animals should be in a separate isolation area, clearly labeled. Any staff member or volunteer should be able to articulate the shelter's enrichment standards. These standards ensure that an animal's mental well-being receives an ethical focus. Facilities should not be overpopulated, and dogs should not be kept in a kennel environment long-term.



Adoption Contract

In preparation for adoption, the group should ask you a reasonable number of questions to ensure they are matching you with the right animal. They will then require you to sign an adoption contract. That contract should stipulate that they will always take the animal you adopted back at any time (with reasonable notice).

Found Animals & Strays

Shelters and rescues alike should always have a strict policy on stray animals. Lawful responsibilities include holding stray animals for up to a week while searching for rightful owners. If an organization is being lax with these laws, this is a big red flag.

Fees

Each organization has to determine its own fundraising strategy and overall approach to determine fees. Typically, fees can range anywhere from free to hundreds of dollars. Fees over \$500 should come with strong reasoning. Fees should never be close to that of a reputable breeder (\$1000+).

Whether you donate to a rescue, work, or volunteer for one, awareness of good standards is vital to ensure high levels of animal welfare in our community. If you think that an animal is being neglected or abused, please call:

1. Local law enforcement first
2. Maricopa County Animal Crimes for unincorporated areas
602-876-1011
3. Arizona Humane Society for most incorporated cities
602.997.7585 Ext. 2073



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