

# **Pet Retention Tools & DIY Rehoming Kit**

## **Introduction**

Pets end up in shelters for all of the reasons you'd expect and even more that you wouldn't. The unfortunate reality is that there are simply more pets in need of homes than there are adopters, and because of this many animals end up in shelters with limited timeframes to find homes, and some of those pets may be euthanized. But this packet isn't about why pets enter shelters. It's about ways to prevent it from happening in the first place.

The goal is always to find a solution to allow a pet to stay in his current home. To that end, in this packet you'll find information about pet-friendly housing, force-free trainers, veterinary care assistance, and other pet retention tools. We hope the information will help pet owners keep the pets they already have.

Sometimes leaving a pet in his current home isn't an option. In that case, the best outcome is for the pet's owner to DIY and rehome the pet without him entering the high-stakes shelter system. Below, you can also find information here on how to connect with interested adopters and rescues.

## **Pet Retention Tools – Helping people keep their pets**

### **Pet Behavior Concerns**

Pet behavior problems are one of the main reasons pets are relinquished to shelters. Before making the decision to surrender or rehome a pet, consider trying to work with your pet to reduce troublesome behaviors. Many behavioral issues can be solved right in your own home with just some time and patience, allowing you to keep your beloved pet!

If your pet has suddenly begun displaying aggressive or unusual behavior, reach out to your veterinarian to request an exam. Some illnesses, diseases, and other medical conditions can cause sudden unexplained or strange behaviors in pets, and treating the underlying medical cause may resolve the behavioral concern. Potential medical causes may also be an important factor to rule out when addressing behavioral concerns.

Our day to day lives can get very busy, but consider how much time you actually spend training with your pet and correcting problematic behaviors. A mere 10 minutes a day can be enough to create drastic changes in your pet's behavior and in the relationship you have with them if you are consistent. Do you have 5, 10, or 30 minutes each day to work on creating positive associations with their crate, work on impulse-control, or practice leash walking manners? The SPCA of Wake County has compiled a [behavior library](#) of articles for both dogs and cats that cover many common behavior concerns, such as separation distress, resource guarding, and houstraining or litter box troubles. Many of these articles include specific exercises you can do with your pet each day. Remember, there is no such thing as a bad pet! It's

important for any family to work with their pet on good manners in a fun (read: treat-filled) and safe setting by creating positive associations and working together regularly.

If you don't have any time to spare to work with your pet or to get them the exercise and social time they are craving (remember - a tired dog is a happy dog!), you may not be able to address behavior concerns alone. In this case, consider enlisting the help of local dog-walkers, doggy day cares, or asking neighbors for their help. Maybe the teenager down the street could use a little extra cash and would be willing to spend extra time with your dog while you're busy or working.

## Force-Free Trainers

Sometimes pet behavior problems are more complicated and may need the help of a professional to be resolved. The SPCA of Wake County has collaborated with the Force Free Academy for Canine Trainers to create and maintain a list of pet trainers across the state of North Carolina who offer fee discounts for pets adopted from the SPCA of Wake County. However, they're happy to help pets that weren't adopted from the SPCA as well! You may wish to contact several trainers to find one that will be a great fit for your family. You can find the [force-free trainer database here](#).

## For Families with Pet Allergies

An estimated 15% of the population are allergic to dogs and/or cats<sup>[1]</sup>. However, many individuals with allergies are still able to keep their pets through allergy management.

- Speak with your physician or an allergen specialist to determine whether the allergy is to the pet or to another environmental factor. Your doctor can help you determine whether your allergies can be managed using medication and/or diet.
- Dander-neutralizing products such as Allerpet D (for dogs) or Allerpet C (for cats) can help reduce allergens in the home and are available at many pet stores or online. This product can be applied to a pet's fur using a washcloth once a week to neutralize their dander.
- Consider using HEPA air cleaners throughout the house to rid the air of allergens.
- Bathe your pet on a regular basis to reduce the amount of allergens they carry.
- [The Humane Society of the U.S. - How to live with allergies and pets](#)

## Affordable Vet Care Assistance

A quick Google search of 'financial assistance for pet owners' brings up many results. The more you look, the more you'll find, but here are a few to start with.

- Many insurance providers also offer pet health insurance plans. Contact your insurance provider to ask about rates and coverage to determine whether pet insurance is sensible for your family.
- Best Friends offers a "[comprehensive list of resources](#) that offer financial assistance for pet guardians who are struggling, as well as senior citizens, people with disabilities and people who are seriously ill".
- [Care Credit](#) is a company that offers credit cards specifically for medical and veterinary care.

- [Helping Hands Affordable Veterinary Surgery and Dental Care](#) is an affordable vet clinic in Richmond, VA.
- [RedRover.org](#) has a comprehensive directory of national and state-specific financial aid resources.
- You can ask your pet's regular veterinarian whether they can offer any discount or payment plans themselves, or see if there are alternative treatments that may be more affordable for you.
- [Other ways](#) to cope with unexpected veterinary costs.

## Pet-Friendly Housing

- The Humane Society of the U.S. has [compiled resources](#) on how to understand your lease and work with your landlord or HOA to keep your pet in your home, or how to find pet-friendly housing.
- The Wake County Government website has a list of [dog-friendly housing within Wake county](#), categorized by breed restrictions and location (*Last updated on 1/30/17*)
- The Friends of Wake County Animal Center has compiled a spreadsheet of [pet-friendly housing in the Triangle area](#), including some locations outside of Wake County (*Last updated on 1/27/18*)
- Most housing websites allow you to filter your search by pet policy, and many listings include specific details about their policies like fees and restrictions. Some popular websites that have this feature are [ApartmentList.com](#), [ApartmentFinder.com](#), [Apartments.com](#), [Rent.com](#), and [Zillow.com](#).

## Finding Temporary Housing for Pets

Sometimes short-term emergencies come up and you may need a place where your pet can stay temporarily. Here are a few ways you can look for temporary housing for your pet until circumstances change.

- Ask friends, family members, and coworkers if they would be able to care for your pet temporarily, or if they know anyone else who would be able to.
- Write public posts on your social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) advertising your pet and ask your friends to share the post to reach a wider audience.
- Pet boarding facilities can be utilized to house and care for pets (even cats) short- and long-term. Search "pet boarding near me" to find local facilities and get more information about their pricing.
- Some pet-sitters can bring your pet into their home for the duration of their care. You can find local pet-sitters by contacting local pet-sitting small businesses or searching pet-sitting databases such as [Rover.com](#).
- [911fosterpets.com](#) helps with peer-to-peer fostering for animals in need of temporary homes. Here you can post your pet for foster parents to see. 911fosterpets will try to connect you to potential foster parents so you can get your pet in a safe home right away.
- [Differences between foster homes and long-term boarding for pets](#), plus more resources for finding temporary housing

## Resources for Military

[Read more](#) about what you can do if you receive a military PCS order and how that may affect your pet.

- [Guardian Angels for Soldier's Pet](#) offers foster homes for pets of military members and veterans, under certain conditions.
- [Dogs on Deployment](#) has a searchable database of volunteers that help with in-home boarding for pets of military members.
- [Fayetteville Animal Protection Society](#) is Fayetteville and Cumberland County's only licensed no-kill shelter.

## Resources for Victims of Domestic Violence

- [RedRover](#) has information about grants and housing for people & pets in need after domestic violence.
- The Animal Welfare Institute offers a [searchable database](#) of shelters across the country that "provide sheltering services for the companion animals of domestic violence victims, have a relationship with an entity that does, or provide referrals to such facilities."

## Affordable Pet Food Programs

- The SPCA of Wake County and the nonprofit group Resources for Seniors collaborated to create the [AniMeals program](#), which provides pet food to home-bound seniors and adults with disabilities in Wake County.
- SAFE Haven for Cats' [Pet Food Pantry](#) provides temporary assistance for up to 3 months for residents of Wake County.
- [Pet Food Pantry of Eastern NC](#) has a monthly assistance program for residents of eastern NC as well as a "Meals on Wheels" program for seniors (*pets must be spayed/neutered*).
- Many suppliers of pet food and supplies offer manufacturer's coupons! You can find pet-related manufacturer's coupons from [Coupon.com](#) and [Walmart](#). Additionally, TheKrazyCouponLady has lists of coupons for [cat products](#) and [dog products](#).

## Why DIY?

### Competition

Even in a "no-kill" shelter environment, your pet will be alongside many other pets, all waiting for homes. Shelters can be noisy and frightening, and sometimes excellent pets aren't able to show their best qualities to the people who've come to choose a new companion. If your pet isn't the most beautiful, the best behaved, and the closest-to-perfect one in the whole facility, he may very well get overlooked and repeatedly passed by. Time in frightening, noisy environments is hard on pets, and the longer they spend in kennels wondering where their families are, the more stress they can experience. Stress can cause unattractive behaviors, and unattractive behaviors can cause stressed animals in

shelters to continue to be passed over. For some pets, ending up in a shelter – even a really great shelter – can turn into a vicious cycle in a competition they become less and less likely to win.

If you look for a new family for your own pet, he can stay with you during the process, and the people who come to see him are interested in meeting him, specifically. If all goes well and the adoption takes place, you'll have the peace of mind that comes with meeting the people who are bringing your pet into their lives, and your pet can have the peace of mind that comes with staying out of the shelter system altogether.

## **Owners know pets best**

Nobody in the world knows your pet better than you do. You know his favorite foods, his feelings about vacuum cleaners, and which television shows he likes best. You know where he likes to be scratched, how he likes to be spoken to, and what sorts of mischief he gets into when he's bored. You've been your pet's family for as long as he's known you, and so you're more qualified than anyone else to know what he's going to need from his new human friends.

## **Space is limited**

Many shelters operate on an Open Admission basis, which means they don't turn any incoming animals away, regardless of how much space there is to house them in the facility. Sadly, many animals are euthanized in order to make room in the kennels and cages for the new arrivals. In North Carolina, shelters are required to keep stray animals for three days before choosing what step they'll take next in their journey, but if an animal is surrendered by his legal owner, the law does not require any "hold time" at all. Because these shelters are obligated to make sure the pets in the community that have been picked up as strays have a place to stay while their families try to locate them, it's possible that on a busy day in a busy shelter, pets surrendered by their owners might be euthanized before ever being placed in a kennel, since they're not lost and nobody is going to come searching for them. If you know you can't keep your pet forever, please consider going through the rehoming process yourself instead of bringing him into the shelter system. Surrendering him may cost him his life almost immediately, or, perhaps another healthy, adoptable animal will have to lose her life because she's come to the end of her 3<sup>rd</sup> day, and the shelter wants to put your dog in her kennel.

## **Define No-Kill**

Maddie's Fund:

"The term No-kill is defined as saving both healthy and treatable dogs and cats, with euthanasia reserved only for unhealthy & untreatable animals. Each organization or community is responsible for defining the terms "healthy, treatable, untreatable, and manageable" in ways that are appropriate and applicable to their particular geography, economy, and population. While no-kill organizations save all the healthy and treatable shelter dogs and cats under their care, no-kill communities save all of the healthy and treatable pets in all of the animal welfare agencies community-wide."

No-Kill does **not** mean "no euthanasia."

# **DIY Rehoming Tips – When you can't keep your pet**

## **First - Where Did You Adopt Your Pet?**

Most reputable breeders and rescues can facilitate returns for pets that were originally adopted from them. If your pet was adopted from a breeder or rescue, reach out to them first to ask about their pet retention resources and their return policies. Breeders may also have a list of individuals interested in adopting an adult dog from their breeding program.

## **How to Network Your Pet and Utilize Social Media**

- Ask friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers if they or anyone they know would be able to take in your pet, either to adopt or even to foster temporarily while you find a more permanent solution.
- Create eye-catching flyers to promote your pet to potential adopters and ask if you can post them in vet's offices, pet stores, or other high-traffic community areas.
- Some rescues can post courtesy listings for owned pets that are in need of new homes. Contact rescues in your area to ask about sharing your pet's information.
- If your pet is not already spayed/neutered and up to date on vaccinations, consider having these things done prior to rehoming. Pets who are spayed/neutered, fully vaccinated, and microchipped are considered more "adoption-ready" and may be more attractive to potential adopters.
- Write public posts to your Facebook, Instagram, & Twitter accounts advertising your pet, including pictures & a short written profile of your pet. Be sure to specifically request that readers share your post with their own social networks!
- Write posts in Facebook groups for pet rehoming in your area. These can sometimes be called "rehoming networks" and may be helpful for finding short-term foster as well.
- Great pictures can make a huge difference for catching the eyes of interested adopters! You can [read about basics for taking good pictures](#) of your pet, and view some [before-and-after examples of pet photography](#). HeartsSpeak has some free resources for [photographing pets and writing pet bios](#).

## **Online Rehoming Websites**

Online adoption services can be a much safer alternative to classified advertising. The websites listed below allow you to post your pet as available for adoption where they can be seen by millions of potential pet adopters, and some even provide adoption contracts, free vet exams for adopters, and matchmaking services.

- [Rescueme.org](#) allows you to promote your pet online with a self-published profile & pictures and allow interested adopters to find your pet by searching by breed and location.

- [Rehome](#) is a service provided by Adopt-A-Pet with support from the Petco Foundation. With this site, you can create a pet profile, review applications, meet potential adopters, and finalize your pet's adoption with a provided adoption contract.
- [Get Your Pet](#) is an online service that connects owners with interested adopters and provides guidance on careful vetting, tips on what to ask, where to meet, and even lists participating veterinarians who will provide a free pet exam upon adoption.

## Screening Potential Adopters

When searching for potential adopters for your pet, it's important to ask the right questions to ensure adopters will provide a loving home and have an environment that is well-suited to your pet. Be open and honest about any medical/behavioral considerations your pet may have. In the links below, you can find suggestions for what sorts of questions to ask potential adopters and how to ensure their home will be a good fit and their intentions are good. You should not rehome your pet to a family if you are not completely comfortable about being a good fit.

- Here is a list of [questions to ask a possible adopter](#).
- Never advertise a pet as "free to a good home". In order to prevent your pet from being taken by someone who may treat them inhumanely or use them in illegal activity, you should always conduct an interview with the adopters (in person, when possible) and ask for a small rehoming fee as part of the adoption process.
- If possible, ask adopters if you can visit their home to see where your pet will be living and ensure that the environment is appropriate for them to live there happily.
- Consider asking interested adopters for their veterinarian's name to contact as a reference.
- You may wish to ask for a copy of their photo identification, such as a driver's license, for future reference.

## Finding Other Rescue Assistance

Generally, there are 3 ways to rehome a pet: finding an adopter directly, surrendering to an open-admission (high-intake) shelter, or finding placement with a no-kill rescue. North Carolina has dozens of no-kill rescues across the state, and while many rescues prioritize pets at high-intake shelters that may be at immediate risk of euthanasia, spacing in rescues changes by the hour. Some rescues are able to accept owner-surrendered pets into their adoption programs. Here are a few ways to maximize your chances of success in finding rescue placement.

- [NoKillNetwork.org](#) is a database of no-kill rescues organized by location. Look for rescues that work with the type of pet you want to surrender, and reach out to as many rescues as possible to maximize your chances of success. This website is quite comprehensive but doesn't necessarily include information for every rescue in your area, so you may wish to do additional research.
- When contacting rescues it's important to include as much information about your pet as possible. Some types of information that rescues look for are: demographic information

- (age, breed, size), high quality photographs, a bio or write-up about their personality, the reason(s) for needing to rehome, where you adopted the pet originally, and any medical/behavioral considerations they may have. You may also wish to include a copy of your pet's medical history or veterinary records, particularly if they have had recent heartworm or FIV/FelV testing. If you know whether or not your pet does well with children, cats, and/or dogs, you can include that information as well.
- If you're able to travel, extend your search to rescues that are outside of your area or even in neighboring states. The more rescues you contact, the more likely you are to find one who can admit your pet.
  - If your pet is purebred or a recognizable breed mix, reach out to breed-based rescues for assistance. Even if rescues aren't able to accept a surrendered pet, they may keep a list of interested adopters who are looking for a pet like yours. Contact the American Kennel Club (AKC) at [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org) or the AKC Gazette (212) 696-8390 for their annual list of breed-based rescues. You can also search online using terms like "[breed] rescue".
  - If a rescue isn't able to help place your pet, ask if they have any other rescue contacts or rehoming advice to share.

## Resources for Feral/Barn Cats

- [Alley Cats and Angels](#) is a Triangle-based organization that rescues, relocates, and provides spay/neuter surgery for stray, abandoned, and feral cats.
- [TNR Wake](#) provides resources for trap-neuter-release (TNR) and colony control for stray and feral cats within Wake County. TNR Wake Helpline: (919) 743-2287
- [Operation Catnip](#) helps to provide TNR for feral/colony cats. (*Trap-neuter-release only, not a rescue*)