



Additional Resources for Small Animals

We understand that our Small Animal Assistance Program may not work for everyone. We've put together some additional resources to assist you with rehoming your small animal or bird, or perhaps work through some issues that may be making you hesitant to keep your pet:

1. Forever Home Manual - tips and tricks for re-homing your pet on your own. Please read through this guide for information on appropriate advertising and screening adopters.
2. Other organizations in CT that **may** be able to help:
 - Connecticut Parrot Rescue, info@ctparrotrescue.org or 203.690.9055
 - [The Critter Connection](mailto:publicity@ctguineapigrescue.org), publicity@ctguineapigrescue.org
3. Behavior Resources - our goal is to keep pets in their homes whenever possible. If you need behavioral advice or assistance, these organizations are great resources.
 - [Humane Society Guinea Pig Tips and Care](#)
 - [Pet Place Small Mammals Pet Behavior and Training](#)
 - [Pet Place Pet Bird Behavior and Training](#)
 - [Association of Avian Veterinarians Basic Pet Bird Care](#)



Our Companions

Animal Rescue & Sanctuary

Forever Home Manual for Small Animals

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Introduction

Our Companions Animal Rescue is offering you this guide to help you find a forever home for your pet. You are doing the right thing by taking personal responsibility for your pet's fate. You are also helping other pets by not shifting the burden on a shelter. Shelters are usually at capacity and by taking responsibility for your pet, it allows shelters to spend their resources on other needy animals.

Much of the content of the Forever Home Manual was reproduced from Best Friends Animal Society. Thank you Best Friends, for helping us help people and pets in Connecticut!

Finding a New home

Something has happened in your life and you can no longer take care of your pet. Or perhaps you have found a lost bird and need to find him/her a home. Maybe a friend or a relative has died leaving one or more pets to be placed in new homes. You want to be able to do something to help find this animal a new and loving permanent home, rather than turn him/her over to a shelter where they may be euthanized.

The suggestions in this booklet will help you achieve your goal. We will show you how to create an effective flyer with some tips on taking a good photograph of your pet, and how to write imaginative text that will capture the attention of a prospective adopter for a flyer or a classified ad in the paper.

We discuss the preparation of the pet; making sure that the animal's veterinary care is up to date, and that he/she is healthy and groomed.

And we will show you how to take advantage of the networks already established to advertise your animal.

Most importantly, we walk you through the screening process. We assume you don't want to just give the pet away without checking up that he/she is going to a good responsible home. We suggest what questions you may want to ask to find out if this will be a suitable new home.

THE GROUNDWORK— Preparing great flyers

- Describe the appearance, size, and age of the animal.
- Describe his/her nature and appealing qualities.
- Include the pet's name.
- State that the pet is spayed or neutered, if species appropriate for them to be spayed/neutered.
- Define any limitations, e.g. not good with other small animals/young children/other pets.
- Use a good photograph. Close up "head shots" are best.
- Be sure to put in your phone number, email and time you can be reached.
- Depending on the situation in your area, you might want to add "No Bunchers" to your ad. Bunchers are people who pose as prospective adopters, pretending to be loving and concerned. The pets they obtain are then sold to licensed B dealers who in turn sell the pets to research laboratories. See further information on this subject in the telephone screening section.

Tips on taking good animal photographs

When you take photographs, use a background that is in contrast to the animal in order to highlight his/her best features. Keep it simple and clear with few background distractions. Use a person, a hand or some other means to show the scale of the pet. Take the time to get a calm relaxed photo that does not present the pet as aggressive or scared.

The flyer is an advertisement. Make it clear, fun and appealing.

Prepare your pet

When appropriate for the species, it is imperative to spay or neuter your small pet you are trying to place. Without this procedure, no reputable humane rescue group will help you. Pet overpopulation is an overwhelming problem and we all need to do what we can to prevent more unwanted animals from being born. Call us for information on low cost clinics throughout the area.

Prepare a history of your pet.

Include as much information as possible about his/her likes and dislikes; current food preferences, relationship to other animals; whether he/she likes to play with certain types of toys. All this information will help make the transition easier on the animal. We have a personality profile form that you may want to complete to succinctly describe your pet to prospective adopters.

Groom your pet so that he/she looks their best. If it is relevant, talk to a professional about your pet's disposition. Often the help of an experienced and caring professional can help you solve quirky or destructive behavior, making it easier to place the pet in a new home.

Network

Take flyers everywhere!

- To your veterinarian.
- To your work.
- To pet supply stores such **as Petsmart, Petco, Pet Supplies Plus, PetValu.**
- To community bulletin boards.
- Show your family, friends and co-workers.

Spread the Word

Contact as many rescue agencies as possible.

Visit Petfinder.org, Pets911.com, or Adopt A Pet.com.

Most agencies will be at pet handling capacity, but might allow you to show your pet on one of their adoption days. They might have some other suggestions, or be able to put you in contact with someone who is looking for the kind of pet you are trying to place. Our Companions maintains a database of people who are seeking pets as well.

Advertise

Place an advertisement in your local paper, mention in the ad that an adoption fee is required. The bunchers we mentioned earlier gravitate towards ads that offer pets "Free to a good home". Asking for a fee will discourage these people from following up on your advertisement. If you would like Our Companions to guide you through this process, we request that the adoption fee be donated to our organization.

Run the ad several times with a picture if you are looking to reach a wide audience.

CLASSIFIED Ads

Here are some samples of classified ads:

Little Susie is ready for love! Susie is a one-year-old spayed female tri-colored guinea pig with a great personality. Call Marie after 6 PM at 123.123.4567. Adoption fee & Contract to apply.

Sweet Pickles waiting for you! He is ready to entertain you! Pickles is a 6 month old apricot-colored dwarf hamster with lots of energy. He'll be adopted with his full cage setup, food and toys. Call Mary at 123.555.3576 after 7PM weekdays or all day Sunday. Adoption fee and contract required.

Telephone Screening

When someone responds to your flyer or advertisement, you have an opportunity to interview him or her over the phone before introducing them to the animal. By doing so, you can eliminate unsuitable potential adopters early on. The following are some guidelines for helping you find the best possible new home for your pet or rescued animal. The following is a list of questions we suggest you ask the prospective adopter. Ask them in a conversational style, rather than as a questionnaire. For example: "This pet is very special to me, and I am looking for just the right home for him/her, would you mind if I ask you a few questions about yourself and your home?"

As you speak with people, gather all their contact information (name, address, phone, email, etc). Make thorough notes on your conversation and their responses to your question.

Questions

1) Is the pet for you or someone else?

If he/she is for someone else, then tell them that you need to speak directly to the prospective owner. A gift of a live animal for another person can be a terrible mistake. If the pet is for a child, then tell the person that the animal needs to be seen as a family pet, not exclusively the child's. Parents need to realize that they must be willing to take on the responsibility for the day-to-day care of the animal for the rest of its life. Children can be involved in the animal's care, but often their attention span is sporadic. We have seen many pets turned in to shelters because the children have lost interest.

2) Do you live in a house/mobile home/apartment?

3) Does the situation have suitable space for this type of pet?

4) Some pets, such as birds, may live longer than their human caregivers. What plans would you put in place should this pet outlive you?

From the answers to these questions, you can start to build a profile of the person and where they live. The address alone can tell you a lot about the area in which they live.

5) Have you had pets before? If so, what has happened to them?

Responses to these questions can be very revealing about the person's level of responsibility. We have found that letting people talk quite a bit in this area elicits the information. You might start by saying "Do you have other pets at home? What do you have?" From these answers, you can determine whether the pet you are placing will fit into this household. If you are trying to place a bird and they have cats, this will obviously require some planning. If they do not have pets now, ask if they have ever had them and where they are now. You might start to see a pattern. If they say, "Oh, my last three dogs were run over/poisoned/stolen etc." You are not looking at a responsible home. One negative incident in the past would not immediately rule that person out. Accidents can happen to even the most caring people. On the other hand, they might tell you of the pets they have had until they died of a ripe old age. This will tell you that these people are willing to make the commitment to an animal for its whole life.

6) Do you have children? If so, what are their ages?

Children can be either a blessing or a curse to a pet! Small children often do not know how to differentiate between a live animal and a stuffed one. And even the most vigilant parent can't be watching the child all the time. This will be your own judgment call with the pet you are placing.

Small adoptables who live primarily in cages make wonderful family pets. If the animal you are placing has had any kind of biting or nipping incident around children, it would be irresponsible to place that animal in a home with any children. The prospective owner needs to be aware of the history of the animal, as even an adult only home may receive visits from grandchildren or neighbor kids.

The child/animal bond is very special and can be of tremendous value in producing a compassionate, caring person, who will bring those qualities into his/her whole life. So this decision to take on a family pet needs to be made with great care. We see a lot of kids learning that animals are disposable items to be gotten rid of when they become inconvenient, or when the family moves. We would rather they learned that the pet is as valued a member of the family as they are.

7) How many hours would the animal be alone during the day?

The number of hours that an animal will be alone during the day needs to be taken into account.

8) Do you own your own home or are you renting? Does your lease allow pets? May I have your landlord's number?

If a person is renting, you will need to ensure that they have permission in writing to have a pet. We have known people to try to sneak a pet by the landlord, only to be found out. And guess who has to go! So you are back where you started, or the animal ends up at the pound.

9) Are you willing to have me come to your home to see where the animal will be living?

If they are unwilling then immediately rule them out for adoption. If they are willing, we require that you do make the visit. Seeing the other pets in the household will tell you a lot about the level of care your pet will receive.

10) Ask for references

Personal references and veterinary references are great sources of information. If they have other pets, ask permission from the adopter to contact their vet to get a reference on them as a pet owner. When you call, ask the hospital if the animal is up to date on his/her care. Also, ask if any suspicious injuries have ever occurred. If they do not have other pets, ask for personal references. Remember, people who are proud, responsible pet owners will be happy to give references.

What happens next?

After you have asked your questions and received the answers, you will have a good idea about the prospective owner and whether you feel he/she will make a good home for the pet you are placing. Of course, it is always possible that the answers you received are not truthful. Some people may answer in the way they think you want to hear rather than how it actually is. You will need to use your instincts. And this is why it is important to meet the people in person and see their home.

Meeting the Prospective Owner

By the time you reach this stage, you will have found out quite a bit about the prospective owner and his/ her suitability as a new home for the pet you are placing. You have some choices about where to introduce the animal to the new person.

Our Companions Animal Rescue recommends meeting your prospective adopter in a neutral territory, which takes some creativity when planning a meet and greet for a bird or small adoptable.

It is always better to err on the side of caution when first meeting someone. If the person does not turn out to be suitable for some reason, it is best they do not know where you live.

Hopefully you will be as impressed with the prospective owner in person as you were on the phone. However, if there are some doubts in your mind you could mention that there are other people interested in seeing the pet and that you will get back to them. This can give you the opportunity to make a graceful exit without confrontation.

You will want to observe how they relate to the pet, and how the pet relates to them. This will give you a lot of information. It is fine to be concerned about your pet's well-being and any reasonable person understands this. It is better to be safe than sorry. And we advise you do not give up the pet until you have checked the home and living situation.

If you decide to go ahead with the adoption, you may want to use a contract like the one included with this booklet. This can be a safety net for both you and the new owner. Complete two copies of the contract and both of you can sign them. Leave one with them and take one with you. Also, hand over any medical records, and any cage, special food, toys, bowls or bedding.

Final Thoughts

Placing an animal using these procedures takes time, but your pet has been a good and faithful companion to you. He/she deserves the best new home you can find. You will sleep better knowing that your pet is happy, healthy and safe in their new home.

Don't give up after just one or two interviews. If you persevere, you are sure to find a new owner eventually. If you are working on a time limit and that time expires with no home in sight, then consider reaching out to friends/family to see if they can house and care for your adoptable small animal or bird temporarily.

Once you have made a match, stay in touch. Call regularly to see how things are going, particularly at the outset. Be careful not to bug the new owners, though. There is a time to let go and allow the owners to form their own bond with the animal. If there are any problems with the transition, remember that Our Companions can also help with advice, training and solutions if necessary.

Whatever you do, do not abandon your pet. A domestic animal cannot fend for itself. Some of the saddest sights we see are domestic pets set free to fend for themselves. Abandoned pets also become subject to injury, disease, starvation and death.

We wish you the best. Our Companions, other animal groups, and many concerned individuals have used these procedures to re-home many rabbits. It can be done. It is done every single day. So take heart. With some effort, creativity and perseverance you can do it too.

Example of an Adoption Contract the prospective adopter would complete:

ADOPTION CONTRACT

Name of Adoptee _____ Date _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Pet Name _____ Sex _____ Age _____ S/N _____

Color and description _____

Name of Adopter _____

Address _____

AS THE ADOPTING PARTY I AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING PROVISIONS:

- 1) If species appropriate and the pet is not already altered I agree to have the pet altered.
- 2) I agree to keep the _____ (type of pet) as an indoor only pet.
- 3) If for any reason I cannot keep the adopted pet, I agree to notify the Adoptee (name and address above), of the availability of the pet and to return the adopted pet upon request.
- 4) I agree not to abuse or neglect the adopted pet and I authorize the Adoptee, at his/her sole discretion, to determine whether or not the pet has been abused or neglected.
- 5) I understand that any failure to perform the foregoing agreement will constitute a breach of contract. In the event of any such breach of contract, I authorize the Adoptee to reclaim both possession and ownership of the Adopted pet.
- 6) I understand that the pet covered by these adoption papers, is as far as can be determined by the Adoptee, in good health and that the Adoptee is not responsible for any medical fees incurred after the adoption date. However, if a health problem develops during the first 10 days, I should notify the Adoptee to discuss the matter.
- 7) I agree to give the Adoptee visitation rights to ensure that the terms of this adoption agreement are being observed.

ADOPTEE _____

ADOPTER _____ DATE _____

Need More Help?

Our Companions offers a re-homing program where we can work with you on advertising, screening potential adopters and making a match between your pet and an adopter. We can do all of the work a shelter would do, with the pet staying in the comfort of his own home until he is adopted. It is a much smoother transition for the pet and the new owner!

If you are located in Connecticut, contact us to discuss how our programs can help you:

Helpline@ourcompanions.org or 860.242.9999

Our Companions Animal Rescue

P.O. Box 956

Manchester CT 06045

860-242-9999

www.OurCompanions.org

CT Area Small Animal Veterinarians

Town	Veterinarian	Practice	Phone Number
Bantam	Dr. Brian Sullivan	Bantam Lake Animal Hospital	(860) 567-8369
Bethel	Dr. Aubrey Fitch	Bethel Veterinary Hospital	(203) 794-0247
Bolton	Dr. Michelle Pesce Dr. Kathryn Zyra	Bolton Veterinary Hospital	(860) 646.6134
Bristol	Dr. Kathleen-Marie Clark Dr. Cara Sweet	Chippens Hill Veterinary Hospital	(860) 583-9271
Canton	Dr. Aaron Begg	Roaring Brook Veterinary Hospital	(860) 693-0214
Canton	Dr. Arnold Goldman	Canton Animal Hospital	(860) 693-9300
Cromwell	Dr. Barbara Hess	Companion Animal Hospital	(860) 632-7955
East Hartford	Dr. Wilfredo Barrios	East Hartford Animal Clinic	(860) 282-8989
East Haven	Dr. Heather Rife	Veterinary Associates of East Haven	(203) 469-6531
Ellington	Dr. Joseph Prichard	Ellington Center Animal Clinic	(860) 871-3064
Farmington	Dr. Paul Chace	Advanced Veterinary Care	(860) 677-0309

CT Area Small Animal Veterinarians

Town	Veterinarian	Practice	Phone Number
Granby	Dr. Paul Groshek	Salmon Brook Veterinary Hospital	(860) 653-7238
Harwinton	D. H. Kraut	Litchfield Hills Veterinary Hospital	(860) 485-1978
Kensington	Dr. Robert Giddings	Kensington Bird & Animal Hospital	(860) 828-7736
Kensington	Dr. Lora Miller	Animal Hospital of Berlin	(860) 828-1170
Marlborough	Dr. Sean Pampreen	Marlborough Bird & Animal Hospital	(860) 295-1595
Montville	Dr. Jo Michaelson	Montville Animal Hospital	(860) 848-1277
North Haven	Dr. Julia Shakeri	Central Hospital for Veterinary Medicine	(203) 865-0878
Norwich	Dr. Amy Crockett	Norwichtown Veterinary Hospital	(860) 886-0188
Plantsville	Dr. Joyce Clark	Mt. Lore Animal Hospital	(860) 276-8553
Suffield	Dr. Anita Sabellico	Suffield Veterinary Hospital	(860) 668-4041
Trumbull	Dr. Ian Ostrover	Trumbull Animal Hospital	(203) 268-6231
Wilton	Dr. Clare Fahy	South Wilton Veterinary Group	(203) 762-2002