

Don't Offer Your Pet For Free

You're anxious to find a home for your cat – a GOOD home. And some people who take free pets do provide wonderful homes. However, frequently--much too frequently!--rescues all over the country are called in to rescue former "free to good home" animals.

Did you know:

1) People value what they pay for. Pets obtained for free are less likely get regular veterinary care (why bother with vet bills?), and more likely to be abused and/or discarded, because "there are plenty more where that came from!"

2) So-called "Bunchers" gather free pets until they have enough for a trip to a Class B Dealer who is licensed by the USDA to sell animals from "random sources" for research. While, unfortunately, there are legitimate medical reasons to use some animals in experimentation, the majority of reputable medical labs use animals bred for the specific purpose. However, there are many, many different types of animal "research," and many types of facilities that use dogs. Almost every cosmetic, household, and chemical product is tested on animals, including former pets obtained from shelters and Class B Dealers. Veterinary schools and medical schools, and even some engineering schools use dogs and cats in classrooms and "research." Textile manufacturers who make products for medical use test and demonstrate on dogs, frequently retired racing greyhounds.

3) Free animals are taken to "blood" pit-bulls--to train fighting dogs how to kill, and to enjoy it. This can be dogs and cats, of any size--in fact, rescuers suspect that a recently rescued cat was used in this manner. Often, a larger dog's muzzle will be duct-taped shut so that he can't bite back, and the fighting dog will gain confidence in killing a dog larger than he is.

4) Free kittens to "good home" often become dinner for pet snakes.

5) So-called "collectors" watch the newspapers and Craigs List for Free to Good Home animals. These collectors truly believe they are "rescuing" the animals. It's not as unusual as you might believe--or hope. Such people are called "collectors;" they take in orphaned dogs or cats, watch the "free to good home" ads, either don't believe in spaying and neutering or run out of funds for the vet bills. These collectors actually think they are "rescuing" the animals! More and more free pets come to them--they're very convincing; and they truly do love pets--and the ones they have keep reproducing, until the collectors are overwhelmed. In the best circumstances, animal rescue organizations are called. In the worst--the collector simply walks away.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Some folks answering the "Free to Good Home" ads really are loving, responsible pet owners. Many--perhaps even most--are not. There are steps YOU can take to help end abuse:

- **DON'T advertise Free pets**; DO convince others not to. Some people even take the time to phone owners of pets advertising Free to Good Home and warn them of the dangers.
- **DO ask for a "Re-homing Fee" of at least \$35 to protect your cat.** If you have recently spayed/neutered your cat or taken them in for testing or vaccinations, don't be afraid to ask for reimbursement.
- **DO contact local animal welfare organizations for help in placing animals.** If you adopted the cat from a responsible breeder or rescue, he/she will help you rehome the pet.
- **DO take the time to interview every prospective owner.** Ask for a vet reference, and check it. Don't be afraid to call their landlord to make sure pets are allowed and that the adopter has paid any required deposits.
- **DO write a letter to your congressmen in support of doing away with Class B dealers**, who sell animals obtained from "random sources" to research facilities. Random sources include strays, stolen pets, seized shelter animals, animals purchased at flea markets--and pets found through "Free to good home" ads.
- **DO call police, animal welfare workers, even the health department**, if someone in your area seems to be "collecting" cats or dogs
- **DO call police or animal welfare workers for any incidences of suspected abuse.** Be willing to testify in court, if necessary. Note: what constitutes animal abuse is defined by state law. If your state has inadequate abuse laws, TRY TO CHANGE THEM!